

JULY - SEPTEMBER 1953

3/6

SIGHT AND SOUND

*The Film
Quarterly*



Marie Seton : EISENSTEIN and MEXICAN ART

John Houseman : FILMING JULIUS CAESAR

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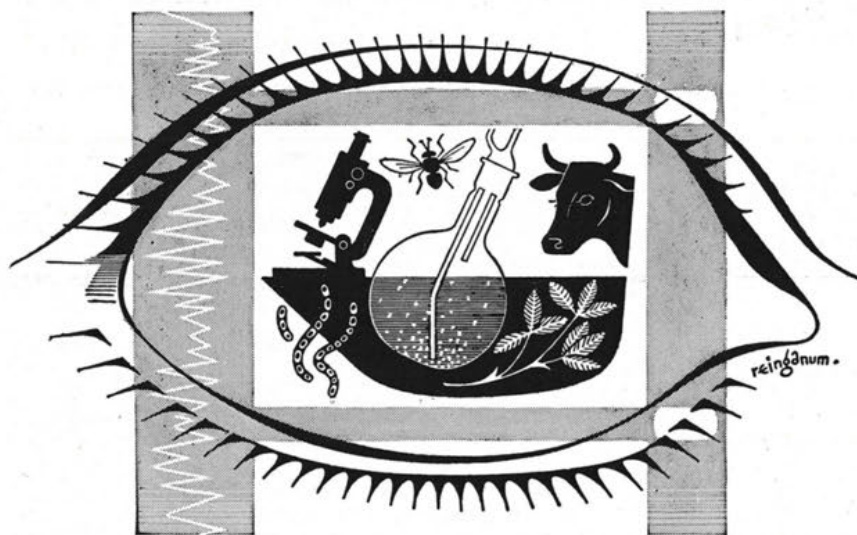
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This list has been compiled for us by the staff of SIGHT AND SOUND and we hope it may serve as a useful general guide to the principal films now in British cinemas.

ABBOTT AND COSTELLO GO TO MARS (G.F.D.). Science fiction burlesque with Abbott and Costello clowning in space suits; not bad for this team. (Mari Blanchard; director, Charles Lamont.)

ADORABLES CREATURES (G.C.T.). Four women and a young fashion artist. Overlong sex comedy, with too few bright moments but good performances from Danielle Darrieux and Renée Faure. (Daniel Gélin, Martine Carol, Edwige Feuillère; director, Christian-Jaque.)

ANDROCLES AND THE LION (R.K.O.). A minor Shaw comedy, over-dressed with extravagant lack of taste in a Pascal production, but partially redeemed by most of the acting and a respect for the text. (Victor Mature, Jean Simmons, Robert Newton; director, Chester Erskine.)

BEGGAR'S OPERA, THE (British Lion). Ambitious but unexpectedly tentative, scrappily mounted version of the popular classic. Technicolor. (Laurence Olivier, Dorothy Tutin; director, Peter Brook.)

CALL ME MADAM (Fox). Disappointing screen version of Irving Berlin's musical; Ethel Merman's brassy vitality briefly entertains, but the book and the sets let the piece down. (George Sanders, Vera-Ellen, Donald O'Connor; director, Walter Lang.)

CAPTAIN'S PARADISE, THE (British Lion). So-so comedy about a seafarer with two lives and wives. Well acted. (Alec Guinness, Yvonne de Carlo, Celia Johnson; director, Anthony Kimmins.)

FANFAN LA TULIPE (Films de France). Gérard Philipe as legendary French hero in a kind of French *Crimson Pirate*. Lively, if a bit heavy-handed swashbuckler. (Gina Lollobrigida; director, Christian-Jaque.)

GIRLS OF THE PIAZZA DI SPAGNA, THE (Studio One). The lives of three working girls in Rome; amiable but stereotyped Italian film. (Lucia Bose, Cosette Greco; director, Luciano Emmer.)

GLORY BRIGADE, THE (Fox). U.S. engineers in Korea laboriously discover fighting abilities of their Greek allies; a promising subject conventionally treated. (Victor Mature, Alexander Scourby; director, Robert D. Webb.)

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN (R.K.O.). Goldwyn's big, slow, sugary, non-biographical study of Hans Andersen and his alleged love for pretty, married ballerina. (Danny Kaye, Renée Jeanmaire; director, Charles Vidor.)

HEART OF THE MATTER, THE (British Lion). Solid, fairly pedestrian version of Graham Greene's love-and-guilt saga set in West Africa, with a questionable ending and a good performance by Trevor Howard. (Maria Schell; director, George More O'Ferrall.)

I LOVE MELVIN (M.G.M.). Debbie Reynolds and Donald O'Connor as a chorus girl and a Press photographer in lightweight musical; mildly entertaining. (Director, Don Weis.)

INNOCENTS IN PARIS (Independent British Lion). Adventures of a B.E.A. 'plane load on a weekend in Paris; predictable situations, still more predictable jokes. (Alastair Sim, Ronald Shiner, Claire Bloom; director, Gordon Parry.)

INTIMATE RELATIONS (Adelphi). English remake of *Les Parents Terribles*, touring company standard: a scorcher. (Marian Spencer, Harold Warrender; director, Charles Frank.)

***LILI (M.G.M.).** A French orphan girl, a circus juggler and a puppet show operator in engaging sentimental comedy, with a delightful performance from Leslie Caron. (Mel Ferrer, Jean-Pierre Aumont; director, Charles Walters.)

LION AND THE HORSE, THE (Warners). Simple story of cowboy's capture of and devotion to a wild horse. Fair going for animal lovers. (Steve Cochran, Ray Teal; director, Louis King.)

MACDONALD OF THE CANADIAN MOUNTIES (Fox). Mounties and Indians, with a troublesome tribe being persuaded back to the reservation; usual scenery and adventures. (Tyrone Power, Cameron Mitchell; director, Joseph M. Newman.)

MEMBER OF THE WEDDING, THE (Columbia). Carson McCullers' delicate study of an adolescent in the South loses most of its charm and subtlety in a disappointing transcription. (Julie Harris, Ethel Waters, Brandon de Wilde; director, Fred Zinnemann.)

MOULIN ROUGE (Independent British Lion). An alleged biography of Toulouse-Lautrec, unimaginatively untrue to life: some interesting Technicolor. (Jose Ferrer; director, John Huston.)

PETER PAN (R.K.O.). The demure Barrie classic gets the full Disney treatment and quickly goes under.

PICKUP ON SOUTH STREET (Fox). A regenerated pickpocket rounds up a Commie spy ring; much beating-up, little tension. (Richard Widmark, Jean Peters; director, Samuel Fuller.)

SINGLE-HANDED (Fox). Screen version of C. S. Forester's *Brown on Resolution*; a competently presented naval adventure story. (Jeffrey Hunter, Michael Rennie, Wendy Hiller; director, Roy Boulting.)

STALAG 17 (Paramount). The Broadway hit about life in a prisoner of war camp; crude, rowdy but competently done comedy-melodrama. (William Holden, Don Taylor; director, Billy Wilder.)

STORY OF THREE LOVES, THE (M.G.M.). Technicolor package film of three short stories variously treating love; lush, expensive looking, literate, but disappointingly heavy-handed. (Kirk Douglas, Pier Angeli, James Mason, Moira Shearer, Leslie Caron; directors, Gottfried Reinhardt and Vincente Minnelli.)

SWORD AND THE CROSS, THE (R.K.O.). The gay Tudors: rompinglyre-written account of Henry VIII's sister's love for a dashing man-at-arms. Technicolor. (Richard Todd, Glynis Johns; director, Ken Annakin.)

THUNDER BAY (G.F.D.). Divers searching for oil beneath the deep blue sea; gushing with spectacle and malarky. (James Stewart, Joanne Dru; director, Anthony Mann.)

TITANIC (Fox). A cross-section of passengers involved in the famous disaster, skilful hokum. (Clifton Webb, Barbara Stanwyck, Richard Basehart; director, Jean Negulesco.)

TROUBLE ALONG THE WAY (Warners). John Wayne as football coach at a college presided over by Father Charles Coburn; rather unhappy mixture of sport, religion and sex. (Donna Reed; director, Michael Curtiz.)

TWICE UPON A TIME (British Lion). Whimsical piece about teenage twins who bring their divorced parents together; slow and syrupy. (Charmian and Yolande Larthe, Hugh Williams, Elizabeth Allan; director, Emeric Pressburger.)

WAY OF A GAUCHO (Fox). Customary western exploits in different setting—the Argentine Pampas. Good colour, scenery. (Rory Calhoun, Gene Tierney; director, Jacques Tourneur.)

WILL ANY GENTLEMAN . . . ? (A.B.-Pathé). Vernon Sylvaine's play about the effects of hypnosis on a timid bank clerk; traditional British stage farce. (George Cole, Veronica Hurst; director, Michael Anderson.)

YOUNG BESS (M.G.M.). M.G.M.'s coronation piece: the "love" story of the first Elizabeth and Thomas Seymour told in teashop Tudor style. (Jean Simmons, Stewart Granger, Deborah Kerr; director, George Sidney.)

(Films reviewed in this issue of SIGHT AND SOUND are not included in the Film Guide.)

Those marked with an asterisk are especially recommended.

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ON THE COVER : Fred Astaire, Ninette Fabray, Jack Buchanan,
in a number from Vincente Minnelli's new musical, *The Band Wagon*.

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FILMS RAOUL PLOQUIN for *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*.
SYNOPS for *Les Anges du Péché*.
FRANCO-LONDON FILM for *Le Salaire de la Peur*.



A scene from George Stevens' new film, a Western story, "Shane", with Jean Arthur and Alan Ladd. Other players are Van Heflin and Brandon de Wilde.

IN THE PICTURE

Many Dimensions

"Hollywood," the *Hollywood Reporter* recently observed, "is taking on an entirely new face." On the surface, this appears due to the continued dickering by various companies with more than a dozen different 3-D processes and various shapes and sizes of screen.

Recent events make it clear that we now have to distinguish broadly between four types of film production: the poor old flatties, 3-D, Cinemascope, and the "new wide screen" or "giant panoramic screen"—both of which, seemingly designed as a kind of makeshift appetiser, have been presented in London. And, as a further complication, some producers are favouring 3-D plus wide screen.

With all this experimentation, production in Hollywood has, of course, slowed down considerably, with most studies shedding overhead loads. This has, the *Hollywood Reporter* remarks, basically little to do with the new "depth" processes. "The revamp has been and will continue to be an economical must, with at least 50 per cent of studio overheads to be chopped down. . . . Ticket sales, or the lack of them, have demanded a change in the production set-up of every plant making pictures."

Of the major plants, Fox, as is well known, is putting all its eggs into the Cinemascope basket. Spyros K. Skouras, as well as announcing a first schedule of 19 Cinemascope pictures over the next twelve months, has also revealed that 2,522 cinemas in the U.S.A. have so far ordered Cinemascope screens. Accounts (as opposed to blurbs) of the company's recent showings of Cinemascope tests in New York, however, suggest that results were not altogether encouraging; in particular, a change in the proportions of the screen is under consideration. At M.G.M. Dore Schary has introduced a programme of 34 pictures over the next 18 months, of which two will be in Cinemascope (*Knights of the Round Table*, to be produced in England, and a remake of *Rose Marie*), and two in 3-D, *Rodeo* and *Kiss Me, Kate*; the rest will employ M.G.M.'s own "wide screen" and stereophonic sound process, as demonstrated at the Empire with *Young Bess*, with the difference that the films will be made for this purpose.

So far, no further Cinemascope productions have been announced, and interest appears to have shifted to the 3-D plus wide screen combination, quite a hot favourite at the moment. All the major companies, however, have chosen screens of different sizes. Columbia, plumping for 3-D, are using the Columbia Vitascope, involving a four-way camera which, the studio claims, can be used for 2-D, 3-D, 2-D-wide screen and 3-D-wide screen. Their Vitascope includes *Miss Sadie Thompson*, a musical Technicolor version of Maugham's *Rain* with Rita Hayworth, a Technicolor musical version of Maugham's *Too Many Husbands* with Betty Grable, and a life of Franz Liszt. Paramount, with their own 3-D system, Paravision, announce a Danny Kaye comedy (with Mai Zetterling) called *Knock on Wood*, and a musical, *Red Garters*, combining 3-D and wide screen. RKO have launched a couple of Westerns and a *Son of Sinbad* in Natural Vision; Warners—who have patented their own equivalent of Columbia's all-purpose Vitascope—have made three Natural Vision pictures in Warnercolor, drastically cut down their permanent staff, and are working out an ambitious 3-D schedule; Universal-International have a 3-D-wide screen science fiction fantasy by Ray Bradbury, *It Came From Outer Space*, in a "new and untitled" process.

Each of the 3-D processes, it should be added, employs a different method of stereophonic sound, and at least four different colour systems are also involved: Technicolor (Fox), Technicolor and Anscocolor (M.G.M.), Warnercolor (Warners), Technicolor and Eastman Color (RKO).

The most mysterious outsider, in fact, now seems to be the wide screen, which at first glance stands in the same relation to Cinemascope as the latter to Cinerama, and has the full-scale backing of M.G.M., the only company which is not using it simply as an addition to 3-D.

Among the most interesting or curious 3-D projects of all: Hitchcock: *Dial M for Murder*, with Warnerphonic sound.

Camerini: *The Odyssey*, in Technicolor, 3-D and flat, starring Kirk Douglas and Sylvana Mangano (as Penelope, Nausicaa and Circe), and scripted by Ben Hecht. This is

being made in Italy with an American financial connection, and was originally planned by Pabst.

William Cameron Menzies: *The Maze*, for Allied Artists, a mystery-thriller based on designs by Salvador Dali, and starring Veronica Hurst.

Cinerama, meanwhile, has been undergoing internal upheavals, mainly due to financial difficulties. It has now secured increased support for production activities, mainly, *Variety* considers, through Louis B. Mayer, whose hand has been strengthened as a result. The company's first films on the schedule are Mayer projects, *Paint Your Wagon* and *Joseph and His Brethren*. A potential rival, in immensity at least, is a new company called Magna Film Corporation, which has announced its intention to make films on 65mm., combining 3-D and wide screen. The board of directors includes Lee Shubert, Joseph L. Schenck, Rodgers and Hammerstein, and the first production is to be *Oklahoma!*

A footnote to the present situation is provided by an American dispatch to *The Cinema*, which points out that standardisation of processes is, for the moment, unlikely. "It's now generally thought," the report continues, "that standardisation could harm rather than help, since it might tend to freeze developments at an untimely stage and block further improvements."

Great Britain, meanwhile, remains almost entirely at the consumption end. We have had three 3-D films, and two rather tentative installations of new wide screens, discreetly curved. The Rank Organisation has released *Bwana Devil* at various large cities outside London, where its novelty value has proved considerably less than in America; and the A.B.C. circuit has announced that it will equip thirty of its cinemas with new wide screens, and that fifteen of these will also be equipped for 3-D.

In the production field, apart from a few new shorts from Stereo-Techniques, including a Halas and Batchelor cartoon, *The Owl and the Pussy Cat*, there is the M.G.M. Cinemascope film at Elstree and some private 3-D experiments being conducted at Ealing and Pinewood. Greater things are so far limited to promises of some rather weird projects in association with American interests. *Viz.:*

Queen Esther, a biblical drama in Cinemascope at Elstree, starring Hedy Lamarr and partly financed by her.

Gentlemen Marry Brunettes, from the novel by Anita Loos, to be directed in Technicolor by Richard Sale, in 3-D-wide screen, starring Jeanne Crain.

A John Huston version of *Richard III*, starring Jose Ferrer.

Another American Visitor

"You really are a character, sir," Sidney Greenstreet's huge and memorable Mr. Gutman of *The Maltese Falcon* might have said of Samuel Goldwyn: "You really are a character." At a Critics' Circle lunch in his honour during May, the 68-year-old spick and spry impressario was looking at least ten years under his age, and every inch a character.

He wished, he began by saying, we wouldn't talk and write about "Hollywood" so much. A film made there wasn't a Hollywood film but the work of an individual—"an individual producer," he involuntarily added; and yet, as he explained this, one couldn't help feeling that Mr. Goldwyn himself was, in many senses, "Hollywood."

The success story, to begin with: the poor Polish immigrant from Warsaw—England, England in the 'nineties, gave him shelter at the age of twelve, and he'd always had a soft spot for England on account of that—who went to New York, became a glove manufacturer, and then, suddenly, was forming a motion picture company in partnership with Cecil B. de Mille and Jesse Lasky, in 1913. The forty years in the business succeeding that momentous date have made of Mr. Goldwyn a "Hollywood" figure in the most fascinating and baffling sense of the terms. His amiable old eagle's face ("I'm in pictures for fun, believe me I am") was running the gamut of contrast, like his productions, during lunch: friendly smile, foxy grin, eager and then withdrawn, cunning and a moment later childlike and simple.

Forty years in the business have clearly made Mr. Goldwyn ready for anything—the third dimension, for instance. He was going to wait for the moment and see, he wouldn't commit himself directly, but he made it plain enough that he was backing the big screen against the polaroids. All the same, he'd wait and see. He had a subject ready for whatever might look best, and the many times-Champion of Champion Producers could easily afford to lie fallow for a year, arranging on the side, maybe, the second run of *Hans Christian Andersen* in a score of big cities. "Everywhere," as he said, "there are too many pictures—and too many bad pictures. In England too," he said, with a smile, foxy and friendly at the same time. He thought one result of the upheavals might be that everyone would produce fewer pictures, and he looked forward to that; he didn't mind about television; a good picture, he felt sure, would always bring them in. There is something reverent, reassuring, and terribly proprietary about the way Mr. Goldwyn says "a good picture."

To crystallise his feelings about critics, he quoted a popular song: "I love you and I hate you. . . ." He hated us for

"The Juggler" is a new Stanley Kramer production, written by Michael Blankfort and directed by Edward Dmytryk in Israel. It tells of a circus entertainer (Kirk Douglas) who returns there after the war.



quite a bit after *Hans Christian Andersen*. But he accepted compliments on *The Best Years of our Lives* and polite brickbats on *I Want You* with disarming equanimity. "I made *I Want You*," he said quite straightforwardly, "because Washington was worried there weren't enough boys volunteering to go to Korea, and thought I should help." But it didn't go down well with the public, he went on, with the characteristic grin recurring, "because they only like pictures about the boys coming back from the war—not going off to it."

In a few years, one feels, he will have forgotten about *I Want You*. He likes to forget failures, though he is not afraid of admitting them. "I've had my share, though I'm glad to say I can't remember some of the titles." Would he ever do another film with William Wyler? someone asked, because hadn't his films with Wyler been among the best he had ever done? This was a partnership Mr. Goldwyn could look back on with pleasure, and his face did just that. "Willie Wyler," he stated, "is a great director. I saw Willie Wyler just the other day—he came up to my office for a talk—and I think maybe Willie Wyler would like to come home."

The lunch began and ended with references to Mr. Goldwyn's defence of Chaplin. On this subject he became most oracular. "Charlie Chaplin," he remarked, "is a great artist. I don't agree with many of the things he says and does, but he's the greatest artist our motion picture business has ever had, and I'd make a picture with him tomorrow if he wanted to. (Applause.) I defended him on the radio just before I came over here, and I haven't heard a word from him about it, I don't suppose I'll hear from him this time either, though we're old friends, but I don't mind about that. That's how I feel about Charlie Chaplin." And as the fellow-immigrant sat down, one felt sure that, even if he couldn't always recognise the devil, he was on the side of the angels.

Encounter with Prévert

LINDSAY ANDERSON writes: St. Paul, one of those little, walled towns perched on a rocky eminence, about thirty miles inland from Cannes, is a place that has managed to remain remarkably itself in spite of its cultivation by a number of French artists and film people, and its consequent attraction of tourists, buses and souvenir shops. Jacques Prévert has lived there for some years now, in a little, plain, pink, pleasant house just up the road from the *Colombe d'Or*—the wonderfully situated hotel, decorated all over with paintings by contemporary French masters, which is where St. Paul's *habitués* are apt to gather. This is where I met him.

It was almost a disaster. I happened to be carrying, or had just put down on a table, a book called *Dieu au Cinéma*, which I was reading for review. Prévert looked at it. "It's rather good," I said, in a tone which nicely implied (or was meant to imply) that I knew quite well what his *a priori* attitude towards such a book would be, that to a considerable extent I sympathised with him, but that in all honesty M. Amedée Ayfre had written a creditable book. Prévert was intransigent. "*Livre imbécile*," he remarked, smacking it down on the table. But a little later he took it up again and began peering inside the uncut pages. At last he found what he was looking for—the particular reference to his films with Carné. "*Voilà!*" he exclaimed, and quoted with scorn, "*Mais toutes ces histoires méritent une étude particulière. Laissons les pour l'instant. . .*" And he chuckled over what evidently struck him as fresh proof of Catholic evasion.

Well, it was no good trying to get Prévert to be fair to M. Ayfre, though M. Ayfre writes very fairly of him. For instance, he says of the Carné-Prévert films amongst others: "If, in such works, there is no reference to 'religion,' it is because religion would be incompatible with their particular climate; because there is no room to spare for it in this world already full, already 'significant' in itself. A religious sense could only be imposed on it from the outside. . . ." If the words "Religion" were not such a red rag to Prévert (as he says, that and "War" are the two things in the world for which he has no patience whatever), he would surely be pleased to be so well understood. You do not need to be long in his company to know that he does indeed find himself in a significant world. His distates are not based intellectually (at least that was my impression); they are rather the violent emotional observe of his loves. He loves women, children,

animals, and men—in that order.

But this may wrongly give the impression of someone testy or self-important. Paradoxically, I think his vehemence is the result of his utter lack of the latter quality. He is grey-haired but smooth-faced; half cherub, half satyr. He bubbles over with youthful enthusiasm, intolerance, and a continuous play of whimsical, disrespectful humour. A cigarette droops habitually from his lips, through which there flows in conversation a staccato torrent of words—difficult for even many a Frenchman to follow precisely. An extremely fascinating position to be in, it may be imagined, for even without understanding a word you would perceive that an endless succession of witty and piercing and challenging things were being said.

I didn't "interview" him of course; so these are only a few sniffs of personality. He likes England, that is to say London, which is all he knows of it. ("*J'adore surtout Limehouse*.") He does not read English, but in translation loves de Quincey and Blake. Also Hogarth, particularly for what he describes as his masterly *theatrical* staging. Modern English writing doesn't mean much to him: Graham Greene, of course, is out of it, and anyway he greatly prefers our women writers. Virginia Woolf: "*Les Vagues—vous avez lu ça?—c'est magnifique!*" As usual with foreigners, he admires our cinema but for its unreality. *Kind Hearts*, of course, and *Dead of Night*, and *Henry V.* Realism, of course, is not his cup of tea; *Bicycle Thieves* doesn't interest him much, though *Sciuscia* is a different matter. He has no time for *The Third Man* (Greene again), but he found *The Rake's Progress* extraordinary. . . .

Work in Progress

U.S.A.

Alfred Hitchcock: *Rear Window*, thriller about a bed-ridden intellectual who is witness to a murder. Produced by Joshua Logan and Leland Hayward; written by Cornell Woolrich (author of *The Window*), and starring James Stewart.

Edward Dmytryk: *The Caine Mutiny*, from Herman Wouk's novel, with Jose Ferrer, produced by Stanley Kramer.

Vincente Minnelli: *The Long, Long Trailer*, a comedy with Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. Then *Brigadoon*, with Gene Kelly; then *I'm From Missouri*, a musical "Huckleberry Finn," with Kelly and Danny Kaye.

Elia Kazan: *East of Eden*, from John Steinbeck's novel.

James Wong Howe: directorial début for *Go, Man, Go*, about the Harlem Globetrotters.

Daniel Mann: a new film with Shirley Booth, *About Mrs. Leslie*.

Charles Walters: *Torch Song*, Technicolor romantic drama marking Joan Crawford's return to MGM. The star sings as well as acts, Michael Wilding plays a blind pianist.

Great Britain

Ronald Neame and John Bryan: *The Million Dollar Bank-note*, Mark Twain's story adapted by Jill Craigie, with Gregory Peck.

Lewis Milestone: *They Who Dare*, a film about the Comandos, with Dirk Bogarde.

Mario Soldati: *The Stranger's Hand*, by Graham Greene, a political thriller set in Venice, with Trevor Howard and Alida Valli.

France

Claude Autant-Lara: *Le Bon Dieu sans Confession*, dramatic comedy with Danielle Darrieux, from a novel by Paul Vialar. Then Colette's *La Blé en Herbe*, with Edwige Feuillère.

Marc Allegret: *Julietta*, from Louise de Vilmorin's novel, with Jean Marais.

Jean Grémillon: *L'Amour d'une Femme*, from his own story, in Agfacolor, with Micheline Presle and Massimo Girotti.

Italy

Noi Donne (*We Women*): the lives of four actresses, Ingrid Bergman (directed by Rossellini), Anna Magnani (directed by Visconti), Isa Miranda (directed by Franciolini), Alida Valli (directed by Zampa).

Mexico

Yves Allegret: *Les Orgueilleux*, from a scenario by Sartre, with Gérard Philipe and Michèle Morgan.

Right: Audrey Hepburn as the ice-cream eating princess and Gregory Peck as the American newspaperman who meet in Rome in William Wyler's new romantic comedy, "*Roman Holiday*".



Oil

ON THE SCREEN



A series of films, sponsored by Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, has been made to illustrate those chapters in the story of the oil industry which are of more popular interest.

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THE superb colour photography of this 20 minute Technicolor sound film takes you through the oil-fields and along the pipelines down to the great refinery on the coast. Shot before Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's operations ceased in Persia in 1951, the film gives a vivid impression of the Company's achievements in that country and of the life led by its British and Persian employees. "Persian Story" was selected for showing at the Edinburgh Festival, the Locarno Film Festival and the Venice Film Festival of 1952.

This film is available only in 16 mm. size.

others in the series can be obtained from the Petroleum Films Bureau from whom all 16 mm. films and selected 35 mm. films may be obtained free of charge. ★



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**A. (3) D.
ONE**

In its fourth annual report, published last April, the National Film Finance Corporation was less hopeful about the future for British film-makers than it had been a year before. Perhaps its own loss during 1952-53 encouraged that scent of rue which appears in its catalogue of reasons for despondency.

"With certain inescapable increases in production costs; with uncertainty about 3-D developments; with a growing audience for television; with falling attendances and consequent reductions in the inflow to the (Eady) Fund; with American companies drawing considerable amounts from the Fund for their British productions; with film hire always open to attack by exhibitors . . . with all this, British producers are not in as comfortable a position as appeared a year ago."

Is this despondency justified? Take a look at the facts on which the reasons are based.

(a) *Increased production costs*: From all the figures available there is no cause to suppose that this increase has been very marked. The average cost of N.F.F.C.-financed first features has gone up, it is true, by nearly £10,000; but when all other British first features are included there is no significant change from the previous year. On the other hand, it must be remembered that, with the present percentage of admission money that reaches the British first feature producer, every £1 increase in production costs means that 80 more people must see his film before he gets his £1 back. Any increase in production costs is a serious matter in the light of—

(b) *Falling attendances*: It is an old and unresolved argument as to how far television's gain is automatically the cinema's loss. But it is not generally denied that there is some connection between the growth of one and the decline of the other. In April, 1949, there were 133,000 television licences in this country; in April, 1953, the figure was 2,142,452—an increase of just over two million. During 1949 the average weekly attendance at British cinemas was 27.5 million; during 1952 it was 25.2 million—a decrease of just over two million. That the change should be the same in both cases is obviously a coincidence, but it is not simply a mathematical quirk that it should have happened.

(c) *American earnings from the Eady Fund*: Based as it is on a payment per admission of one farthing or three farthings (according to the price of the seat), the Eady Fund has failed to come up to the financial expectations of its originators. In 1952, payments into the Fund amounted only to £2,861,000, a figure which confirms the cautious warning of the N.F.F.C. report that "*there are grounds for believing that producers may not be receiving enough from the Fund to make production, even taken as a whole, a paying proposition.*"

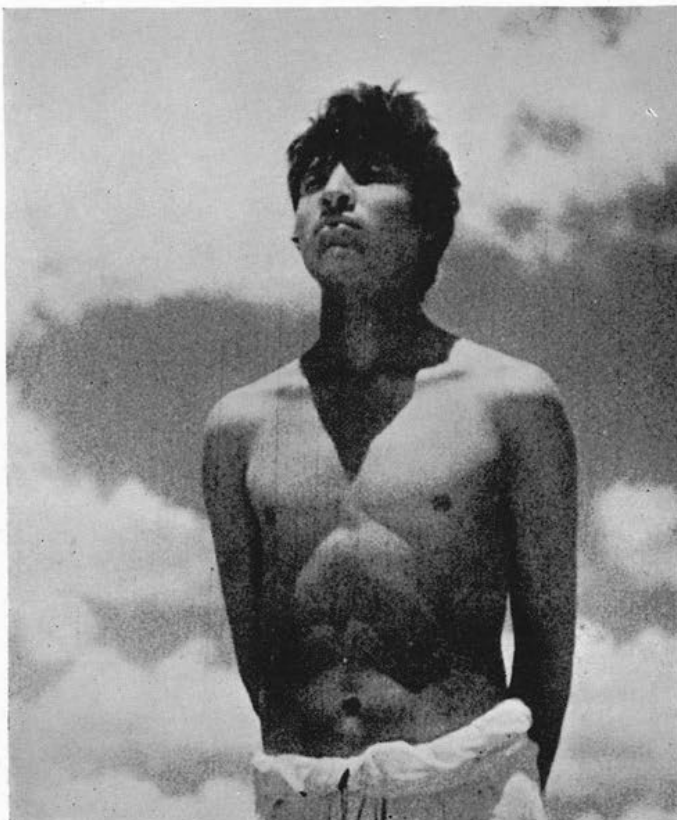
How much of this money goes to the American companies for their British productions? No official figure has been published, but it can be calculated that in 1952 the amount was between 15 and 19 per cent of the total. Though some critics are convinced that it was no part of Sir Wilfrid Eady's original plan to subsidise American companies—and indeed at first sight it may appear strange that something like £500,000 annually out of a fund created to help British film producers is finding its way to New York—yet two points are worthy of remark.

In the first place, about 75 per cent of the feature films shown in this country are produced in Hollywood. As there is nothing to suggest that, on the whole, either British or American films are relatively more popular with the cinema-going public, it is therefore fair to assume that American films are responsible for 75 per cent of the money paid into the Fund. As things are at the moment, both the incidence of the "movie-habit" and the worthwhile existence of the Eady Fund depend upon a large proportion of American films.

Secondly, and without delving too deep into the past history of the balance of payments problem and the original negotiation of the Anglo-American Film Agreement, it should be remembered that it was a cardinal point of the late Government's film policy that employment in British studios should be maintained by the encouragement of Anglo-American productions. Even in the simplest of human exchanges, a *quid* is usually necessary for a *quo*. There is, however, no doubt that the American companies with their good sense are conscious of the Eady criticism, and it may be expected that in future they will be prepared to adjust their *quo* without altering their *quid*.

(d) *The Film hire rate*: The impression created by this ground for despondency is that British exhibitors over the past year or so have been conducting a campaign of erosion on the percentage paid in film hire. In fact figures for the last three years, though on the downward trend, show a reasonable constancy. In 1950, film hire at £24,143,000 was 35.5 per cent of net takings; in 1951, at £24,343,000 it was 35.3 per cent; and in 1952, at £24,154,000 it was 35.1 per cent. Admittedly, gross box-office takings increased from £105,181,000 to £108,296,000 and then to £109,856,000, but the major part of this increase went to producers through the Eady Fund.

(e) *Uncertainty about 3-D developments*: Here, indeed, is the crux of the matter. As far as the economics of the film industry are concerned, the uncertainty created by 3-D is just as great as the uncertainty created by the late Lord Keynes' impact on the whole realm of economics in the early 1930's. Any prediction of the outcome must be very much "in the eye of the beholder," but an optimistic temperament—schooled in the early history of the "talkies"—would suggest that not only will 3-D revolutionise the economics of the film, but that it may also annul the other items in the N.F.F.C.'s list of despondencies. This gesture to the future, however, demands the continuance in some shape or other of the two pillars on which the British production industry now rests—the Eady Fund and the N.F.F.C.—and a recognition that if 1953 is really A.(3)D.One, then indeed it may well be a year of rejoicing for the British film industry.



Comparisons.—Left, a scene from "Time in the Sun": right, a Mexican sculpture of the Maya period.

EISENSTEIN'S IMAGES

AND MEXICAN ART

Marie Seton

The recent exhibition of Mexican art at the Tate Gallery, and the special showing of Eisenstein's Mexican material, the unfinished „Que Viva Mexico!“ arranged at the National Film Theatre, served to emphasise some fascinating correspondences between the two, which Marie Seton here explores. In linking her article with two further accounts of recent film-making in Mexico, we hope to reflect something of the increased interest in the cinema of Mexico and of Latin-America generally. Many people who attended the Cannes Film Festival this year were particularly impressed with the Latin-American contribution, and we hope to publish further news of film-making in this part of the world in subsequent issues.

Daniel Farson photographed the Maya sculpture (p.8), the Posada engraving (p.9), the pre-Columbian sculpture (p.11), the Covarrubias painting (p.12), Orozco lithograph (p.13), at the Tate Gallery; other photographs from the exhibition are reproduced by permission of the Arts Council of Great Britain; the Eisenstein stills are taken off the frame of the film.

This year marks, as it were, the coming-of-age of Sergei Eisenstein's film *Que Viva Mexico!* which he directed in 1931-32, but which he was not permitted to complete or edit. Twelve years have passed since I attempted to preserve as much as possible of his original conception in *Time in the Sun*, a film but rarely seen in England until now.*

For Eisenstein much heartbreak was attached to *Que Viva Mexico!* because it never reached the public in the form that he intended. But in a sense his profound insight into Mexico has been vindicated in the last three months when *Time in the Sun*—skeleton though it is—has been linked as a background of geographic, historic and social comment for the all-embracing exhibition of Mexican Art at the Tate Gallery.

Three of the people responsible for this magnificent display of Mexico's creative history knew Eisenstein in Mexico: Fernando Gamboa and his wife, Suzanna, and Adolpho Best-Maugard, who was Eisenstein's chief technical advisor.

Best-Maugard, whose life's work has been the preservation of Mexico's folk-arts and to whom I gave too little credit in my biography of Eisenstein, saw only some

* In an article entitled *Treasure Trove*, I described the unedited material: SIGHT AND SOUND, Vol. VIII, No. 31, 1939.

isolated rushes of *Que Viva Mexico!* before he saw *Time in the Sun* here in London. He said it came as near to what he understood of Eisenstein's conception as could be achieved by anyone other than Eisenstein himself. If this is true, then it is only because I went to Mexico and tried to absorb the essence of that country and its culture before attempting to edit the film.

Eisenstein conceived *Que Viva Mexico!* as a six-part film: A Prologue representing Mexico before the Spanish Conquest, four stories representing different periods following the Conquest, and set among different groups, and an Epilogue. He termed the stories "novels," for they were a film adaptation of the literary form "novella." Ideas introduced in the Prologue, together with elements from the four "novels," were woven into the dominant motif of the Epilogue—Mexico's unique ceremony of Death Day in which pre-Columbian customs have survived. The connecting theme was that of the "eternal circle"—the idea of the passing of one life and the birth of the next. This theme was introduced in the Prologue, carried forward in each "novel" and, finally, resolved in the Epilogue.

In *Time in the Sun*, I attempted to follow Eisenstein's original conception, which he explained to me in detail in 1934, after his return to Moscow. Since work was halted on *Que Viva Mexico!* before the fourth "novel"—*Soldadera*—was shot, in *Time in the Sun* this "novel" is covered by a title and sound montage.

Eisenstein termed his film the "living History" of Mexico because both the subject and form were drawn from the culture pattern of Mexico, in which a great deal of the past lives on; the past and present faces of Mexican life, culture and art reveal the presence of an unbroken Indian tradition; while the Indian peasant is the eternal mainspring of creative expression, for in him resides the cultural inheritance of Mexico.

Eisenstein became conscious of this in 1928, when Mexico's historical muralist, Diego Rivera, arrived in Moscow with reproductions of his murals—those painted in the early 1920's on the walls of the National Preparatory School and the Ministry of Education in Mexico City. These murals depict the history of pre-Columbian Mexico; the coming of the Spanish conquistadores in 1519, and the revolutionary culmination in 1910.

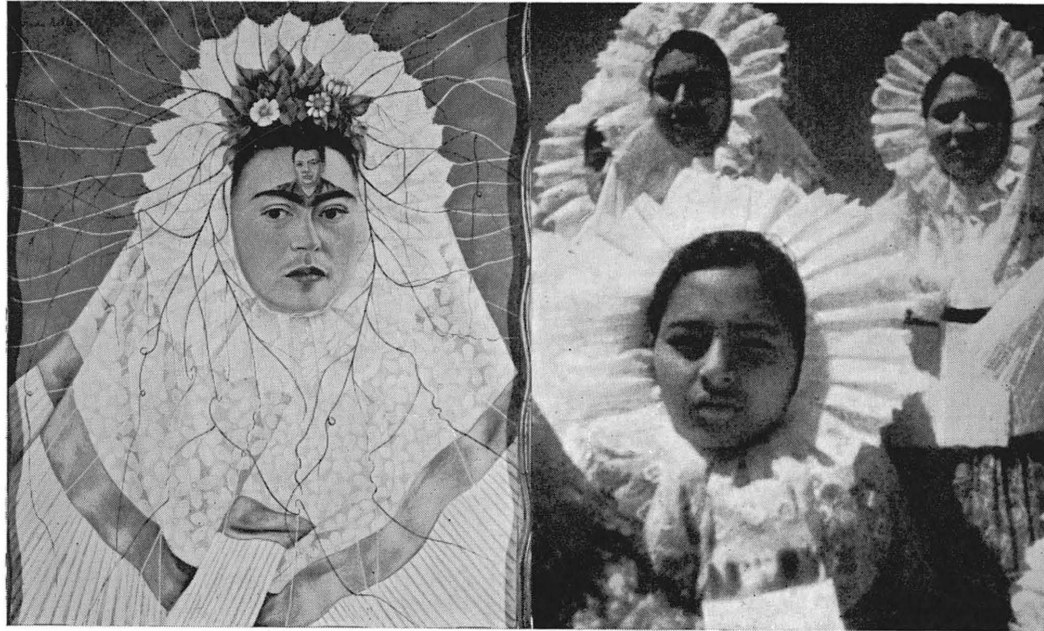
All the major personages of Mexico's history are there in Rivera's murals, just as before the coming of the Spaniards, Maya muralists and Mixteca and Aztec book painters created highly realistic records of their living history and customs. A thousand years and more of Mexican art was clearly functional and had a recognised place in the community; it portrayed the science of astronomy, and religious practices.

The earliest comment on Mexican painting which we have is an account of its functional use. Bernal Diaz del Castillo, who landed with Cortes in 1519, recounts how the chief, Teuhtilli, "brought with him some clever painters such as they had in Mexico and ordered them to make pictures true to nature of the face and body of Cortes and all his captains, and of the soldiers, ships, sails and horses, and of Dona Marina and Aguilar, even of the two greyhounds, and the cannon and cannon balls, and all of the army we had brought with us, and he carried the pictures to his master," Moctezuma.

In modern times, the same civic functions for art were recaptured by Rivera, whose early murals were reproduced at the Tate Gallery along with the murals of Orozco and

A history of the skull. Right : soldier from Vera Cruz in a death mask, Mexican Gulf Culture. Centre : "A Jig in the Beyond," relief engraving by Posada, late 19th-early 20th century artist. Below : image from the "Death Day" sequence of Eisenstein's film.





Left : "Self-portrait as a Tehuana" by Frida Kahlo, wife of Diego Rivera. Right : Tehuana women in Eisenstein's film.

Siqueiros.

It is fair to say that the seed of the film *Que Viva Mexico!* was planted in Eisenstein in 1928 as a result of his meeting with Rivera. But the germination of this seed took place two years later in the United States when Eisenstein came across the book, *Idols Behind Altars*, by Anita Brenner. This book dwelt with intense feeling upon the influence of the pre-Columbian gods, whom the Indian stonemasons buried in the foundations of Christian churches built with the stones taken from ruined temples.

Still more important to Eisenstein was Anita Brenner's account of Jose Guadalupe Posada, the Indian potter who became the one great and original Mexican artist of the 19th and early 20th century. Posada's popular prints—executed largely as illustrations for widely distributed topical ballad-sheets—served not only as graphic "news-papers" for a mainly illiterate public, but also the contemporary artists of the post-revolutionary years. The prints stimulated a renaissance of a truly Mexican style of painting, with roots in the enormously rich traditions of pre-Columbian arts which had survived in the work of the folk-craftsmen—the potters, maskmakers, toymakers and, most uniquely, the confectioners of the Valley of Mexico, who, under the inspiration of Posada, sculpted satiric sugar skulls—*calaveras*—for the celebration of the Day of the Dead on All Souls' Day.

As Eisenstein wrote shortly before his death: "*The bonbons are in form of sugar skulls with chocolate coffins bearing the name of the beloved dead. Puppets on this day are skeletons. Dolls—skeletons carefully bedizened. Skulls as tiepins.*"

And of Posada: "*The series of political calaveras (as the symbols of death are called in Mexico) by Jose Guadalupe Posada: Calavera Maderista, Calavera Juertista, Calavera Zapatista, are positively immortal. Some wear moustaches and hats; others have a spider's body; others, finally, are rigged out in top-hats, etc., etc. For the most part they represent in a satiric form the principal figures of the Civil War.*"

The whole of Eisenstein's Epilogue for *Que Viva Mexico!* was woven as a "Memento Mori" to the genius of Posada, and by paradox was an interpretation of the Mexican spirit triumphing over death.

On arrival in Mexico, Eisenstein first gravitated to the National Museum of Mexico City where he saw—and Tisse subsequently photographed—some of the figures which so dominated the British critics' view of the Mexican exhibition. One of these was the huge Aztec monolith of the goddess of Death—Coatlicue—built up as it is on the main sculptural structure of a headless human body on whose shoulders and neck the plumed-serpent god, Quetzalcoatl, is coiled; and at whose girdle—back and front—hang two grim skulls, brought into juxtaposition with life by the presence of a necklace of living hands. Another was a different interpretation of Coatlicue—that of an aged woman whose hands are raised as if in benediction, but whose head is a skull inlaid with discs of turquoise; and a third, the kneeling figure of a woman whose skull visage wears a diadem of smaller skulls. A fourth was the Spirit of the princess who died in childbirth. These works produced between A.D. 1200 and 1500 were simultaneous in time with the European frescoes of Hell and the Last Judgement, and the historical reality of the Inquisition.

It appears that the most difficult aspect of pre-Columbian Mexican art for the European to understand is the representation of the skull and of sacrificial figures whose hearts were cut out and offered to the sun. The purpose of sacrifice was to transfer to the sun the energy of the individual heart so that the orb would not die out and, thereby, extinguish the life of all living things. While this idea has long since, of course, been scientifically discredited, it cannot be considered either immoral or especially cruel from the Indian point of view, since the aim was to preserve the life force itself for the benefit of man.

Perhaps it will be easier to understand if we imagine the reaction of an Aztec arriving in Spain during the burning of a heretic by the Inquisition, and learning that the victim

was condemned to death because his thoughts were in conflict with prevailing belief. The Aztec might well have exclaimed: "*But the sun cannot be hurt by the thoughts of man; the sun will still shine and the crops will still grow!*"

His reaction would be based on his own logic: that man should be sacrificed to the gods only for the practical purpose of preserving humanity by feeding energy to the sun. Viewed in this light, the selected victim was serving a worthy purpose. In point of fact, human sacrifice became excessive among the Aztecs only when they felt their way of life threatened. Then they desperately tried to placate the gods—a natural reaction in the face of danger.

In each of the Aztec figures, ferocious, grim and mysterious in their first impact, close study reveals the equilibrium of two opposing ideas—that of death and of life, forming the essence of the "eternal circle" which became the central theme of Eisenstein's film.



historic-political murals of Rivera and the more universally philosophic ones of Orozco, but one of the earliest works of David Alfaro Siqueiros.

This mural entitled *The Burial of a Worker* was, in fact, in memory of the murdered Maya patriot, Carillo Puerta, who had threatened the Spanish hacienda system with what amounted to a return to the pre-Columbian custom of village communal ownership. Subsequently, Siqueiros' mural was translated into the dynamics of film by Eisenstein in the funeral procession which appears in the Prologue of *Time in the Sun*. As Eisenstein told me, this was conscious on his part; as conscious as his own creation of the *calavares* of the General, Bishop, President and other personages in the film for inclusion in the Epilogue, all of which were inspired by the prints of Posada.

In the Mexican exhibition at the Tate, as in *Que Viva Mexico!*, we can trace the steps of the popular death cult backwards or forwards, as you please. In the Popular



Left: A sculpture from the pre-Columbian period. Right: an image by Eisenstein.

As he described it in his *Outline*, it was "*the great wisdom of Mexico. The unity of death and life. The passing of the one and the birth of the next one. The eternal circle. And the still greater wisdom of Mexico: the enjoying of this eternal circle.*" The ingrained Mexican philosophy has survived not only in the unique celebration of Death Day, but in the whole span of murals and paintings by Diego Rivera, and of Jose Clemente Orozco, who in the contemporary world most nearly echoes the spirit of Michael-Angelo, though his style is utterly Mexican. For Orozco (as for the long-dead sculptors who conceived the interpretations of Coatlicue), the world is governed by two equal realities manifested in opposing forces—the eternally destructive and the eternally constructive, which the life and history of man continually represent.

Death and life became the theme of Eisenstein's film, with each part clothed in the characteristics of different periods and among different people in Mexico.

Eisenstein went to the National Preparatory School in Mexico City to see the murals. There he saw not only the

section were the sugar skulls which Eisenstein used as part of his Death Day material. We go one step back to Posada's *calavares*, some of which Eisenstein photographed, including the *Calavera of a Coquette*. On this print, Eisenstein played a pictorial melody to death by re-creating "Sara" of his "novel" of peonage, and "Senora Calderon" of his fiesta "novel," in the likeness of Posada's immortal image. And then we plunge far back to pre-Columbian times—to the little terra-cotta soldier from Vera Cruz who wears his death mask with such amusement.

For a thousand years and more the Indians battled with the ever-present reality of death in their life and customs, and their weapon against fear was an ever-recurring mimicry of death while yet alive. The spirit of *vacilada*—a half-denial, half-belief—emerged. It gave them fortitude to live with zest and die with stoicism, whether as selected victims for human sacrifice or from starvation during the Colonial period or as revolutionaries.

It is a comment on the Mexican attitude that Siqueiros should have been one of the fieriest of union organisers during the 1920's, and forsook painting for five years in



Left: "Four Seated Tehuana Women" by Miguel Covarrubias, contemporary Mexican painter. Right: Tehuana women in Eisenstein's film.

order to fight in Spain. But this is not strange to the art traditions of Mexico. Posada went to prison under the dictator, Porfirio Díaz, because his prints were regarded as a threat to law and order.

Search the murals of Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros, and the heroes are the rebels who rose up to free the Indians from peonage. The first to sound the call for Independence from Spain in 1810 was the priest, Father Hidalgo, who raised the Cross in defence of the rights of Indians, whom the first priests and bishops had helped to enslave by holding *auto da fés* of the Maya and Aztec books of learning. Orozco painted Hidalgo, and Eisenstein filmed his statue. Next came the Zapotec Indian, Benito Juárez, first President of Mexico. Rivera painted him many times. And in this century, the most beloved hero is the peasant leader, Emiliano Zapata, the pure one, whom Orozco has immortalised.

Had Eisenstein been permitted to shoot his "novel" of the revolution—*Soldadera*—he would have created in film terms another figure beloved by Orozco, the woman camp follower, Pancha, who helped to feed the men in Zapata's army and bore a child in the midst of battle.

As it is, Eisenstein had but one heroic figure in *Que Viva Mexico!*—the peon without a name who, faced with death, shakes off the guards who would drag him to the grave, and proudly steps into the hold where he must be trampled to death. The Indian who portrayed this deathless spirit was a labourer on the Hacienda of Tetlapayac. All his life he had worked in the maguey fields, sucking the juice of the plant into a gourd and taking it to the pulque-making sheds. But in him dwelt nobility of spirit, an unbroken pride, comparable perhaps to the spirit of the Maya Indian fifteen hundred years earlier, whom he so resembled, and whom an artist had sculpted in a town in the state of Campeche.

In these two manifestations—the ancient Maya nude figure which was at the Tate and the labourer of Tetlapayac—you can see the history of the Indian spirit.

But there is another and different side to the creative

imagination of the Indians of Mexico. The earliest Mexican figurines, most of which are female nudes and probably represented fertility symbols, have a grace and freedom of expression which denotes an abundant delight in life. The theme of enjoyable daily living developed in a still greater variety of figures from as early as 100 B.C. in the Cultures of Western Mexico, of which the woman carrying a vase is a most expressive example.

I don't know if Eisenstein ever saw the archaic figurines or the woman carrying her vase, but he captured the same quality in his Prologue, where a young man and woman meet and make love, as the last phase of his concept of pre-Columbian Mexico.

This spirit, as expressed in many human and animal figures, has been revived in the contemporary paintings of Rufino Tamayo, who has also drawn upon the folk tradition of the firecracker "Judas" figures which originally came from Spain.

The surviving craftsmanship in pottery, lacquer work and weaving became the properties embellishing Eisenstein's second "novel"—the betrothal and wedding in Tehuantepec. In this "novel" many scenes are almost identical with those captured by the contemporary painters Olga Costa in *Mexican Fruit* and Miguel Covarrubias in *Four Seated Tehuana Women*. Diego Rivera, whose wife Frida Kahlo, the surrealist painter, was born among the Tehuanas, has painted many scenes of daily life in Tehuantepec. The model for his picture, *Woman Grinding Maize*, might have been the same woman who grinds the maize for the feast in Eisenstein's Tehuana wedding, so close is the one interpretation to the other.

Again, in his third "novel" of the peons, Eisenstein introduced the most familiar of Mexican folk figures—the firecracker bull, the wooden frame of which is to be found in almost any cemetery after a feast day. The Corpus Christi and Guadalupe dances introduce masks like those shown in the Popular section at the Tate. A study of these masks reveals not only their dramatic presentation of the Spanish conquistadores, but their genealogical con-

nection with pre-Columbian animal masks which in murals, on funerary urns and in wall sculptures invariably show the human head clenched, as it were, between the jaws of an animal, of a jaguar or the plumed-serpent, Quetzalcoatl, or Kukulcan as he was called by the Mayas.

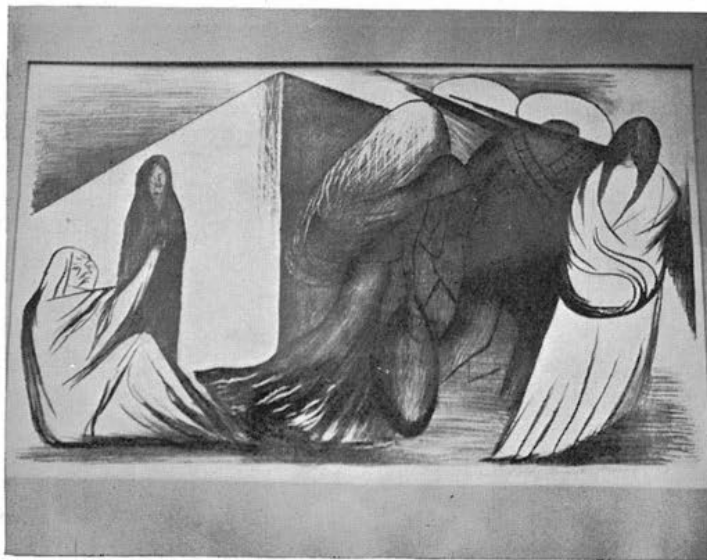
Eisenstein, like the contemporary Mexican painters, was aware of the survival of Indian types. Thus, in the Prologue for *Que Viva Mexico!* Eisenstein united the living face of a Maya with the face of Chac-Mool, the rain spirit, a Toltec-Maya work which somehow seems to have influenced Henry Moore. Eisenstein also related the face of a living Maya to the human aspect of Kukulcan.

As I noted when I was at Chichen-Itza, the ruined city from which Chac-Mool comes and where Kukulcan is carved on a temple wall, the likeness between the sculpted faces and the people of the surrounding villages is very close.

The slightest comparative study of the contemporary Indian man and woman with the pre-Columbian sculpture of their districts reveals that the artists of pre-Columbian days were essentially realists who portrayed individuals rather than idealised types. A perfect example of this is the likeness between the figure on a small Zapotec vase dating back perhaps almost two thousand years, and Isabella Villasenor, who appeared as the young peon's bride in Eisenstein's "novel" of peonage.

One other thing of great importance emerges. The culture of the subjugated Indian peoples gradually transformed the consciousness of their conquerors' descendants, so that the most creative of them have become Mexican, and not Mexicans of Spanish culture. Orozco and Siqueiros are ethnically Spanish, but they became Indian in their outlook.

In both *Que Viva Mexico!* and in the Tate Gallery exhibition one is confronted with two closely related interpretations of the history of Mexico; in particular, the slow merging of the outlook of conqueror and conquered, the persistent vitality of the Indian culture which has returned to full flower in the 20th century. The process was preceded by immense conflict and bloodshed; but it was resolved.



One of the "Soldadera" series of lithographs by Orozco: the story of the "Soldadera" was to have formed the fourth "novel" of *Que Viva Mexico*, but was never shot.

An Historic Film

Memoirs of a Mexican

Irene
Nicholson

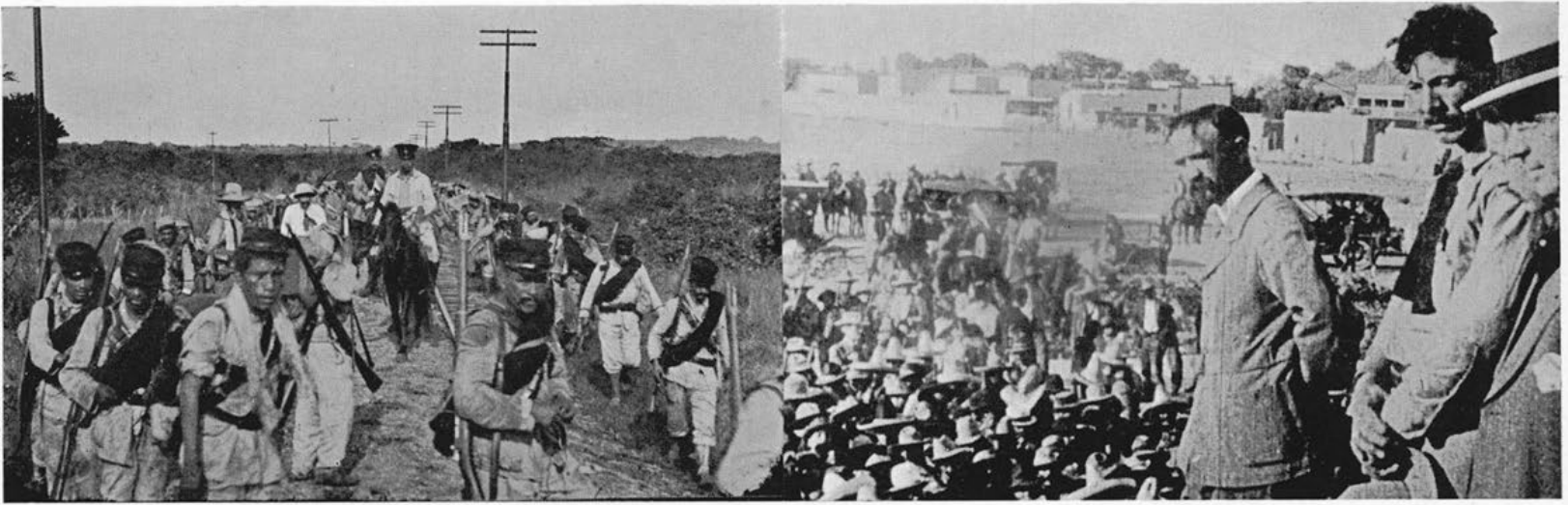


Salvador Toscano Barragán.

The fact that Mexico today possesses a complete cinematic record of one of the most turbulent periods in her history, the revolution that lasted intermittently from 1910 to 1924, is due to the extra-ordinary energies, foresight, and technical skill of a pioneer cameraman, an engineer by profession, Salvador Toscano Barragán. A large share of credit must also be given to his daughter, Señora Carmen Toscano de Moreno Sánchez, who has been zealous in preserving her father's film and who since his death in 1947 edited what was still available and sufficiently well preserved into a film, *Memorias de un Mexicano*, which must be one of the most complete historic documents dating from so early a period in film history.

Señora Toscano has included nothing in the film but authentic material, and the agility with which her father and his two assistants covered the area of 760,000 square miles (the size of the Republic of Mexico) must be the envy of many a modern cameraman. Strategic points of interest had to be anticipated and a cameraman placed on the spot in spite of all the difficulties of disrupted communications and physical danger. Much front-line material was photographed, and the cameramen were audacious in obtaining close-ups of corpses of presidents and other celebrities assassinated during the period. There are many shots taken from moving trains, an extraordinary innovation for that time. The technical quality of the film is remarkable and the composition of many of the shots notably beautiful. Mexicans are by nature artistic, and lovely groupings form themselves unconsciously as peasants in their huge sombreros and patterned sarapes move against the barren plains, the cacti, the old Spanish colonial buildings; but Toscano had a quick and gifted eye to catch these effects. Some of the finest are of the "soldaderas," or women camp followers, looking very tough in their broad peasant hats and following the men on their long marches.

"Toscanito," as his friends called him, was born in 1872. He studied mathematics, chemistry, optics, and mineralogy, and graduated from the University as an engineer. In 1896 when still a student he read in a French magazine of the invention of the cinematograph by the brothers Lumière and at once wrote asking whether it would be possible to buy an apparatus. The inventors replied that none could be made available until the follow-



"Memoirs of a Mexican." Left: Federal soldiers of Madero's army, after he had become President. Right: Madero (centre) addressing citizens of Ciudad Juarez, urging them to rise against Díaz.

ing year, but in 1897 Toscano sent 500 francs advance payment and the apparatus was despatched. One day he received a notice from Felipe Cassedevant that the merchandise was in Veracruz and would be his upon payment of a further 2,000 francs: a vast sum for a student of 24. He tried to find the money by selling his stamp collection but was still short by 1,000 Mexican pesos. In desperation he authorized Cassedevant to sell his longed-for treasure, but the latter, moved by the youth's evident enthusiasm, allowed him to sign letters of credit and Toscanito became the possessor of one of the earliest cinematograph machines, a combination camera, developer, and projector.

The projector was set up in the room of a private house, an Edison phonograph was installed and 10 cents entrance charged. In four months Toscanito had paid back his debt. One of the earliest of his programmes bears witness to the variety of enthralling events that passed across the screen: *Mexican Peasants Galloping; A Women's Quarrel; Queen's Arrival at Windsor (Jubilee Festival in England); Girls Dancing; Storm at Sea; Bullfight*; etc. Toscanito and his projector travelled all over the Republic and up to the U.S. border. It appears that though the cinematograph was already known in the northern states, in the south it was a novelty, and Toscanito wrote home on August 26th, 1900: "*The Yankees have never seen anything like it. They are astonished, but people here don't spend as much as in Mexico. . .*" In his enthusiasm for his own primitive machine he could hardly have foreseen that within a quarter of a century the Americans were to have created the largest entertaining industry the world has known.

In 1899 Toscano had visited Paris and obtained a contract to receive films from Méliès, so that the Mexican public was soon able to see imported comedies and fantasies, including one whose object was "to illustrate the triumph of Christianity over Satan" and in which there was "nothing to offend the most sentimental public." News material was also imported—shots of the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, incidents from the Russo-Japanese and Boer Wars, etc.

But Toscanito was much more than a showman. He began photographing events at home, so that by 1910 when the revolution broke out he had had at least ten years' experience of filming bulls, festivals, beauty parades,

and all the splendours of Porfirian life. From that time on it must have become apparent to him that the material he was collecting would be historically important, and he set about his photographing systematically.

Mexicans are proud of their revolution because it preceded the Russian one, but in fact it was entirely different both in its causes and its effects. While a great part of the globe was involved in the struggle of World War I, Mexico was virtually isolated by internal wars of her own, and the impression Señora Toscano's film gives to at least one outsider is of a country determined at all, even the bloodiest costs, to solve her own problems without intervention from outside. On September 15th, 1810, from the tiny village of Dolores rose the cry of Independence against the Spaniards; this act is included in the present film in the shape of shots taken from one of the earliest Mexican commercial moving pictures, a life of Hidalgo, the village priest who led the uprising. Since that date every foreign invader has been turned out, the French, the Americans, the tragic Emperor Maximilian.

Porfirio Díaz became President in 1876, and during his six terms of office, practically equivalent to a reign, the country was deeply influenced by European and especially French culture. The earliest shots in the film show all the charm of Edwardian fashions, the self-assurance of a comfortably-off and apparently unshakable bourgeois society. The deposition of Díaz amounted for good or ill to a turning of Mexico's back upon Europe, and the revolution that followed was not a class struggle but rather a reassertion of the independence established a hundred years earlier and a last warning that no dictator would be tolerated. The popular Francisco Madero became President, and the film shows his triumphal train journeys up and down the Republic. Counter-revolutionary plotting resulted in his assassination and the ten days of terror known as the "Decena Trágica," and there are dramatic shots of the entirely empty streets of Mexico City which show better than any verbal description the terror under which people must have been living. Victoriano Huerta, the President who succeeded Madero, learnt that Toscanito was in possession of certain photographic material which he considered prejudicial to his own reputation (he had been responsible for Madero's death) and ordered the negative to be seized, but with

a good cameraman's agility Toscano escaped across the roofs of the houses and the negative was saved.

The Americans now attempted to intervene in Mexican affairs and landed at Veracruz. The British, who had a warship in Gulf waters, wisely stood off, and Mexico continued her struggles alone, one President succeeding another while the colourful brigands Pancho Villa and Zapata ravaged respectively north and south.

Not until the term of Calles in 1924 was there any kind of security, though this period too was marred by the "religious war" resulting from the outlawing of the Catholic Church. The material shot by Toscano covers the period up to Calles only, and thus the religious war is not mentioned. With the coming of the talkies Toscano found that the industry had grown too big and cumbersome for a lone enthusiast, and he returned to the pursuit of his profession of engineer, taking practically no more photographs before his death in 1947.

It took his daughter four years to sort and edit her father's negatives into the present film of an hour and a half in length. The work of preparing a new master negative cost 150,000 Mexican pesos, of which the Banco Cinematográfico (a fund for helping to finance film ventures in Mexico) lent 91,000 pesos. The film was so shrunk that velvet pads had to be used so that the projector should not drag and damage the negative. In the original shots the density of light varied so greatly that bits of film of similar brilliance had to be carefully selected for printing together. This exacting work, and also the stretching of the original silent film to the 24-frame-per-minute rate for sound, was done by Javier Sierra, an expert in optics. After two and a half years' work 33,000 feet had thus been salvaged and prepared for editing from the original 80,000. As money was running low, it was not possible to continue laboratory work on the remainder.

Memorias de un Mexicano has been extremely ably edited under the direction of Señora Toscano. The commentary, written by the Señora herself, is put into the mouth of a young Mexican living through the period whose loyalties are split between his father's Porfirian tendencies, his uncle's siding with the revolution, and his

own loyalty to Venustiano Carranza when his uncle decided to follow Pancho Villa. This device is historically correct, since many families were thus divided at the time. There is a background of authentic Mexican music, with judicious interspersal of shouts and crowd noises; the sound track adds vivid emotional colouring to the scenes passing on the screen and has been made with great taste and discretion.

The finished film was first shown in Mexico City on August 24, 1950, and was enthusiastically received by Press and public. It is an interesting commentary on the present-day Mexican attitude to the revolution that during the showing all sides were cheered—Porfirio, Díaz, Madero, Venustiano Carranza, Zapata, Pancho Villa. The only catcalls were elicited by Victoriano Huerta, the murderer of Madero, and by the scenes of the American landing at Veracruz—further evidence of the Mexicans' desire to solve their own difficulties their own way.

Memorias de un Mexicano has been shown throughout the Republic of Mexico, but not so far outside it, though there are plans for limited distribution in the United States. As it stands it is unsuitable for Europe, since the history is complicated and would need explanation. This, however, would by no means be an impossible task, and would involve the sound track only, with perhaps a few minor adjustments at the beginning and end of the film in order to set the revolution against its background.

Señora Toscano is now concerned for the future of this historic material. In Mexico there are many people who recognise in it their grandparents, aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers, and who imagine they have a right to possess strips of the negative; but Señora Toscano has the copyright, which belongs to the photographer himself or his heirs, provided there is no document of transfer to another holder. There is as yet no society for the preservation of such historic material in Mexico, but the film would certainly be worthy of acquisition by any of the official film archives of the world. It must be remembered that film does not last forever, and that for a private individual the expense and responsibility of looking after such material is considerable.



"Memoirs of a Mexican." Zapata (in large sombrero) and Pancho Villa (on the horse behind) watch their troops enter the capital.

A U.N.E.S.C.O. FILM

Last year U.N.E.S.C.O. commissioned Paul Rotha and Basil Wright to make a film about the present movements of social and economic reform in Mexico and Thailand: the film was to be in two parts, Paul Rotha shooting in Mexico, Basil Wright in Thailand, the great geographical distances linked by a common theme. The film, now in its final editing stages, will run for about 55 minutes: Rex Warner has written a commentary, and Elisabeth Lutyens the music.

MEXICO. Above: Students from Crefal arrive on Yunuen island. Centre: Faustimo's home. Below: The unit at work—left to right, Carlos Carbajol (cameraman, in check shirt), Lupe Mayer (interpreter, in sombrero), Paul Rotha (behind camera), Gabrielito, and Faustimo, a Tarascan fisherman.



Mexico

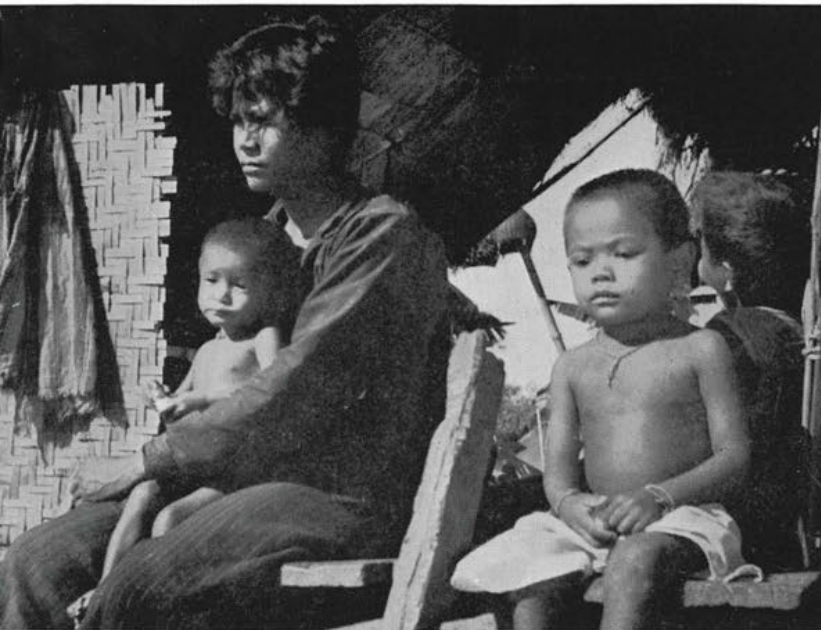
Filming in Mexico imposed a stricter self-discipline on what to shoot and what to pass by than I have known on any documentary since making *Contact* in 1932. The country is so rich in visual beauty of people and landscape, rich in tradition, legend and contemporary incident. But before leaving England, Basil Wright and I had a common story-outline that was precise in its directives, though far from being a shooting script. To script what you have not seen lies only within the orbit of the fiction and cartoon film. So John Shaw-Jones, my unit manager, and I knew that all our shooting would centre round a small market town called Patzcuaro in Michoacan State, some 250 miles west of Mexico City. No trips to Aztec ruins and bullfight scenes for us. Thus, after sufficient time in Mexico City only to arrange for technical facilities of equipment and laboratory work, and to select a small team of Mexican technicians through the Sindicato to be employed by Crefal—the Fundamental Centre at Patzcuaro with whose activities our film was concerned—we proceeded west to explore. Co-operation by and large was excellent. In view of the international status of our film, the Sindicato especially waives some of its stricter rules.

We began shooting on the small but beautiful island of Yunuen on Lake Patzcuaro only a week or so before Wright's unit opened up in Thailand. We kept in weekly contact by airmail and cable, sending each other detailed accounts of material covered. Obviously we bore in mind subjects and problems common to both countries, and to underdeveloped areas all over the world. Our Mexican unit consisted of four technicians, a liaison officer from the Department of Education and an interpreter. They seemed proud to have been chosen to work with an English group on a project inspired by international good will, and designed to further mutual understanding between peoples of all nations. Carlos Carbajol, our excellent cameraman, chose to use a Mitchell camera; occasionally second camerawork by Shaw-Jones was done on a Newman Sinclair sent out from England. We shot a six-day week and usually a 12-hour working day. Visually, the people and locations were a paradise. One understood how Tisse delighted in posed static images when he and Eisenstein toured the country in 1931. Action in people and camera became my main objective. Happily, Carbajol proved to be one of the best operators of camera movement that I have known.

The Tarascan Indians of the area and the Crefal students from many Latin-American countries were quick to collaborate. Before the unit and equipment had arrived, Shaw-Jones and I dug in Flaherty-manner, especially on Yunuen. It was a sad parting when we finally left that little island, but we had 10,000 feet of exposed film as a recompense. In all, we shot about 30,000 feet in the Patzcuaro region, in mountain villages as well as in lakeside communities. We also recorded about six hours' worth of tape sound, including some rich Tarascan songs and music, and a Hymn to the United Nations composed by our boatman, Don Pedro. A rough assembly of our footage was made in Mexico City at Christmas in the Tepeyah Studio, so as to take back to England only essential material. At New Year we left Mexico sadly, full of love for her people, who accept art as a necessity to society, and full of gratitude for the welcome given us. Here was mutual aid indeed.

PAUL ROTH.





Thailand

As the Thai Government's programme of social and economic reform is on a vast scale, and as it has called in nearly all the main U.N. agencies to help, we had to travel very extensively and shoot on widely spaced locations.

Since it was clearly impossible to select subject matter and plan schedules without first seeing the country, John Alderson and myself went to Thailand four weeks ahead of our cameraman, Adrian Jeakins. During this preliminary period we made many valuable contacts in Bangkok, as well as travelling extensively in other parts of Thailand. Incidentally, Alderson, in addition to co-directing, ran the organisation and finances of our unit with a skill and good temper unparalleled in my 24 years' experience of film-making.

When in early November Jeakins arrived, we were also joined by the Thai members of our unit. There is no organised film industry in Thailand, so the Ministry of Education kindly loaned us three young men—Sanan, Kamchorn and Ing. The first had taken a course in Audio-visual Education in the United States; the other two had never left Thailand. All three worked with the greatest enthusiasm and energy, and within a few days of the start of production the unit was bound together in a warm and unfaltering personal friendship—to say nothing of an uproarious sense of humour, which, as on all locations, was often badly needed.

Our first location was in the extreme north-east of the country, 18 hours by train from Bangkok, followed by jeep travel for some 250 kilometres over some of the worst roads I have ever met. Before we reached our destination, Alderson had been flung head-first against the windscreen (which fortunately cracked, leaving his skull comparatively intact), and, more seriously, Jeakins had broken a bone in his right wrist, proper treatment for which was not obtainable until we got back to Bangkok weeks later.

On this location we were filming the sensational campaign against Yaws, that fearful disease which has for centuries been the scourge of Asia and Africa, and which can now be cured by one single injection of penicillin. The problem is not the penicillin itself, but training the teams to administer it, and getting them to the remote villages where the incidence of Yaws may be as high as 40 per cent of the population. We travelled with one of the Thai medical teams trained and organised by Unicef experts. We settled down with them in the remote hamlet of Ban Sang, and followed their work right through from beginning to end. Thus we were able to show the miraculous cures which take place within ten days of a penicillin injection, for, within that short period, the appalling sores and growths completely vanish.

Far to the north, near Chiengrai, we had a wonderful week, by courtesy of F.A.O. and the Thai Government, in the mountain teak-forest with a bevy of that most cinematic of beasts, the elephant. A baby elephant was born while we were there, and by special request of the local inhabitants Alderson became its godfather.

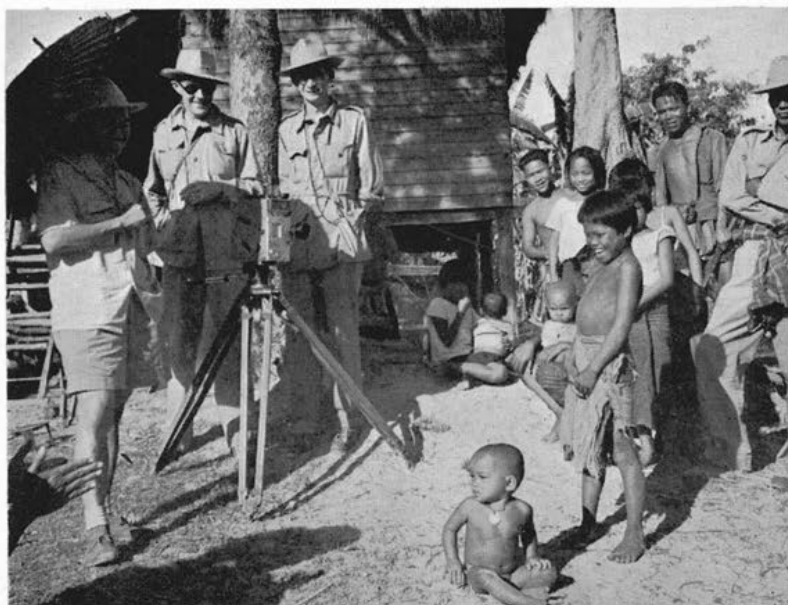
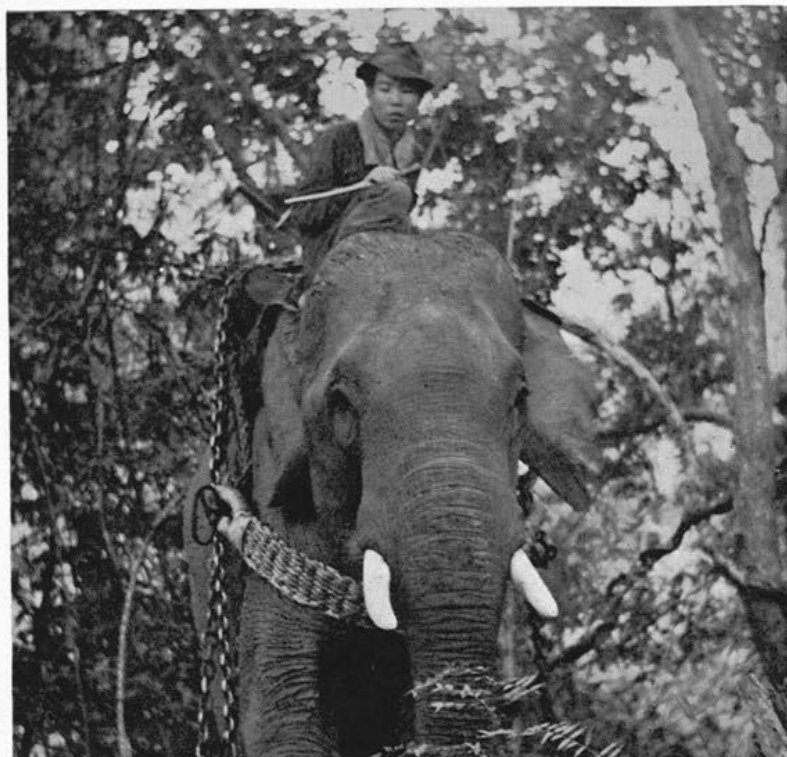
In the Chachoengsao area, part of the rich rice country and about 80 kilometres from Bangkok, we filmed many aspects of Thailand's revolution in education, which is being carried out with U.N.E.S.C.O. guidance and on a very large scale. One of the high spots of this location was when we filmed the arrival of the mobile library at the farming community at Banpakong.

Throughout the whole trip we had the utmost co-operation from the Thai Government and, of course, from all the U.N. agencies. It is perhaps worth noting that, in South-East Asia at any rate, the initials F.A.O., W.H.O., U.N.I.C.E.F. or U.N.E.S.C.O. bring a warm and welcoming smile, generous hospitality and every sort of facility. In addition, we found the people of Thailand both beautiful and good-humoured, the landscapes exquisite, and the local rice whisky delicious, harmless and very inexpensive.

If we have managed to put on the screen only a quarter of what we saw and felt, the trip will have been worthwhile.

BASIL WRIGHT.

THAILAND. Above: Mother and children in north-eastern village stricken with Yaws. (Photo by John Alderson). Centre: Elephant and mahout in the extreme north mountain teak forests. Below: The unit at work—left to right, Kamchorn (assistant), Basil Wright, Adrian Jeakins, villagers, Sanan (chief assistant, extreme right) and camera-conscious baby in foreground. (Photo by John Alderson)





CANNES 1953

Arriving on the Festival's half-way holiday, with nothing to occupy the afternoon except a Battle of Flowers, I had time, first of all, to be brought up to date on what had happened so far. The most impressive film seemed to have been Clouzot's *Le Salaire de la Peur*, which opened the Festival; otherwise, countries relatively new to the cinema had attracted most attention. From Brazil, *O Cangaceiro* (*The Outlaw*) had been much liked, for its original and truly national flavour; the Finnish *The White Reindeer* told a legendary story with some poetic feeling; and with *Bienvenido M. Marshall*, the Spaniards had apparently approached the wit and invention of a good Ealing comedy. The French critic Georges Sadoul was much struck with the Japanese *Children of Hiroshima*, which nobody else appeared to have seen. Other popular French exhibits had been *Les Vacances de M. Hulot*, a comedy by and with Jacques Tati, with the same kind of satirical charm as *Jour de Fête*, and a Flaherty-esque short subject, *Crin Blanc*, about a little boy and his white horse. The only Italian picture to have made much impression was *Magia Verde*, a documentary account of an expedition in South America: outstanding Ferraniacolor. The Americans had received little praise for *Peter Pan* and *I Confess*; *Lili* had been mildly liked, but the Disney short, *Water Birds*, had scored a great success, equalled by the British *The Stranger Left no Card*, which won enthusiastic praise from many people, Cocteau included. Not so *Intimate Relations* (our remake of *Les Parents Terribles*), about which Cocteau himself was most charming, remarking after the Press conference on the film that it was very difficult for the English to recreate the atmosphere of French family life.

The distinguished magician, of course, was president of the jury this year, a responsibility he was by no means content to accept as a sinecure. At his request, the jurors viewed all the contesting films before the Festival began, and by the end had seen the best of them twice. A characteristic design by him hung in the foyer of the Palais, bidding "*Bienvenue à Tous*." Everywhere he went he radiated his unpretentious charm—a charm hardly the less sweet for lacking the least degree of spontaneity. How he despised the worldly crowds who flocked to the Palais without the least care for the cinema in their minds! And how exquisitely, how winningly he moved among them!



The Festival moved eventfully on the familiar two levels—personalities, gossip, conspiracies, and the films themselves. The first level included an absurd accusation of Communism against *Le Salaire de la Peur*; rumours of political pressure in the choice of films, the French Government apparently having insisted on the showing of two pictures, the documentary *La Vie de Clémenceau* and the aviation epic *Horizons sans Fin*, which otherwise wouldn't have been selected; threats by American stars to leave if Chaplin arrived (which he didn't); Picasso

"Dark" films at Cannes. Top: Bunuel's drama of jealousy, "*El*"; centre, Clouzot's prize-winning "*Le Salaire de la Peur*"; below, Trevor Howard in the adaptation of Greene's "*The Heart of the Matter*."

almost excluded from the opening because his evening clothes were not of orthodox cut; Roxane, the American T.V. star and model, leading the usual squadron of shapely aspirants to starlet-ship; and a gathering in memory of Jean Epstein, at which Abel Gance said, magnificently: "*Moi, je suis mort depuis dix années. Je parle à vous avec la bouche pleine de terre. . .*"

★

The films themselves were not quite as far-flung as usual, owing to no participation from countries behind the Iron Curtain; and though one must resist the temptation to generalise, one cannot gainsay it altogether. Of the short films, the categories in prizes themselves emphasised an interesting distinction, including a Grand Prix for the best short subject (*Crin Blanc*), a prize for the best realistic short (the Dutch *Hoenze!*) and the best short fiction (*The Stranger Left no Card*). The Dutch film was highly admired, and without doubt very accomplished: a kind of symphony of reconstruction in Rotterdam (the title means *Keep it Up!* or *Hold On!*). No commentary: images and natural sounds alone, beginning in the yard of a bombed church. A limping man appears. He stops, leaning on his stick, and looks around—sees children running along the wall—hears the sounds of the city—a band marches through the streets—ships load and unload—the market is busy—workmen building—homes, factories shoot into the sky. . . . Visually all is in the best Nordic documentary tradition, of bold, sharply defined images, plenty of children and white buildings, workmen's profiles against the filtered sky; complex sound-track of birds, children shouting, band music, hammering, shouts. Yet to me the film was ultimately unsatisfying, because not sufficiently individual, personal. The established documentary tradition from which it springs is dying from over-hygienic efficiency, and needs an injection of dirt: too much of *Waverley Steps*, not enough of *A Propos de Nice*. At any rate, the shorts which eschewed a flat-on progressive social comment and substituted the angled personal view made a deeper impression. As well as the poetic unrealism of *Crin Blanc*, the fantasy of *The Stranger Left no Card*, there was, on its level of humour and ingenuity, Disney's *Water Birds*, where the birds loop and pirouette to ballet music, and the witty irresponsibility of the Canadian *Sports et Transports* (prize for the best animated film), with its humorous shrug at the horrors of modern urban life.

Of the features, undisputedly the film of the Festival was *Le Salaire de la Peur* (Grand Prix), with the general eulogy of which I am unable to agree. It is a big and ambitious effort—but in what direction, really, beyond the simple ambition to be big? Essentially a melodrama, its central and extended episode chronicles the suicidal drive over rough country of two lorries—four men—loaded with high-explosives which they are not properly equipped to carry. From his painful concentration on it, one presumes that Clouzot wished to give the drive an epic, or at least a symbolic importance (though he has



Documentaries at Cannes. Top: "*Crin Blanc*." Centre: an episode from "*La Vie de Clémenceau*"—the statesman having concluded a successful shooting expedition. "*J'ai tué trois tigres . . . tout en machoire, et pas de cervelle. J'aime pas les tigres.*" Below: Disney's "*Water Birds*."



Palais and plage. Left : Vera Clouzot, H. G. Clouzot, Picasso, Yves Montand and Mme. Picasso arrive for an evening show. Right : Anne Baxter cooperates with photographers. Photos : Robert Hawkins.

played every breath-taking trick with slogging persistence). But its beat rings hollow. There is no identification possible, and no attachment of sympathy, nor on the other hand is the character-play penetrating or startling enough to sustain interest on its-own. One is left with the impression of a work supremely *voulu*, all to no end.

Failure of human response is sadly apparent, too, in de Sica's *Stazione Termini*, which seems more a Selznick than a de Sica picture, and comes out as a glossy-magazine corruption of the neo-realist tradition. The devotion of the film to one incident and one couple—the separation of two lovers, the American woman who feels she must leave her Italian lover to return to her husband and child—is only achieved by highly artificial plotting. Another much praised film was Fernandez's *La Red* (*The Net*, special prize for the film "*mieux raconté par l'image*"), a sort of Mexican Mary Webb triangle drama, filmed with brilliant concentration, but again substituting a lushed-up sensuality—admittedly more potent than de Sica's—for true poetic feeling.

The one exception to this catalogue of disappointments was Bunuel's amazing *El* (*He*). It is sad to report that this film, so unlike any of the others I saw in its combination of technical authority with a vivid and uncompromising personal style, was received with a general lack of appreciation, in fact laughed at during the projection and given, of course, no award. *El* could almost be called a remake, in terms of superficially "realistic" melodrama, of *L'Age d'Or*. The hero, a man of wealth and

apparent self-possession, is a paranoiac, ruthless in pursuit of his desires, insanely suspicious of everyone around him. He seduces the fiancée of one of his friends, and immediately, on their wedding night, accuses her of infidelity and libertinism. The rest of the film—an *Othello* with the hero as his own Iago—is taken up with a meticulous exposure of the progress of this dementia. A succession of astonishing sequences display in turn Bunuel's favoured themes; his preoccupation with mental sickness and fixation, his thrusting libido, his savagely humorous anti-clericalism.

But it was hard, indeed, not to be dispirited by the general lack among the Festival films of courage, generosity, readiness to expose and commit oneself. So much technical capacity, so little feeling, no affirmations. (Lindtberg's *The Village* tries to affirm something, I suppose, but it is wretchedly banal and sentimental; the best in this line has been *Come Back, Little Sheba*, which won the *Film Dramatique* prize.) Perhaps one's feelings were heightened by a certain increase in *snobisme* in the Festival, with evening clothes compulsory at evening shows, cocktails, galas and receptions assuming greater precedence. One managed, none the less, to make contacts, and perhaps they remain the most invaluable part of it; not the stars and directors, for even with the most sympathetic of these it is difficult to get beneath superficialities, but with one's fellow-enthusiasts—the people, no doubt, one will meet again at Venice. . . .

LINDSAY ANDERSON.



Aspects of Cannes. Left : Husband and wife team, Zsa Zsa Gabor and George Sanders. Right : "characteristic design by Cocteau . . ." In front, Montand and Serge Reggiani. Photo : Robert Hawkins.

THE FIFTH COLUMNISTS

Roy Edwards

The beautiful travesty : Brigitte Fossey and Georges Poujouly in "Jeux Interdits."



"Furieux, les élèves se ressoudent et massacrent tout le monde avec leurs instruments de musique. Dieu et ses saints retombent sur la terre et deviennent, une averse de grêle qui tombe sur une procession et la disperse."—From *Midi*, a scenario by Benjamin Péret.

In the U.P.A. cartoon *Willie the Kid*, the children are able to change the house, where Mom waits to give advice, into the sides of a canyon—or, rather, they do not "change": the house walls really do become the canyon sides. One is sometimes inclined to believe that the almost magical powers commonly attributed to children cannot, in fact, really be there, but it is only necessary to watch them playing in the street to realise, as did the makers of *Willie the Kid*, that they can do anything, that the present ritual is everything—whether it be cowboys and Indians, Captain Marvel or smash and grab raids. They live in a strange world, one which can, at a moment's notice, be changed into anything desired; and is, at the same time, a well springing with profoundly illogical terrors and joys. The child himself does not choose to be a minor version of Christopher Robin. If circumstances permitted, he would usually prefer to be the half-terrified hero-worshipper of Jaibo in *Los Olvidados*.

With varying degrees of success this fact has been recognised and interpreted in much fiction and autobiography of recent years, which is one of the sharpest contrasts presented by contemporary novelists to their Victorian forebears (examples that come to mind are Alain Fournier, Jocelyn Brooke, Denton Welch, Truman Capote, Carson McCullers); but it seems to have been missed by all but the most discerning film-makers; and as for the results obtained by the rest, we have all been made more than painfully aware of the tribes of chubby-cheeked innocents in company with dogs or "sick persons." Such ingredients can only come to life in the too human hands of Charlie Chaplin.

It is a mistake to believe, as most people do, that most children are innocent, lovable and amusing. It would be

more true to say that they are dangerous fifth columnists, they love only themselves or others of their own breed, they would, given the gunpowder, blow the nursery walls right down. Lewis Carroll knew something about all this when, in 1862, he took a photograph called *The Elopement*, which shows a young girl escaping from a window of the family house.

Jean Vigo, when he made *Zéro de Conduite* (1933), René Clément when he made *Jeux Interdits* (1952) and, with regard to his particular theme, Luis Bunuel in *Los Olvidados* (1950) realised all these things and yet still loved the children whose stories they told. That is why, although twenty years separate them, these films move on the same plane and are among the most profound ever made.

In *The Golden Age* Kenneth Grahame wrote:

"We *Illuminati*, eating silently, our heads full of plans and conspiracies, could have told them (the adults) what real life was. We had just left it outside, and were all on fire to get back to it. Of course we didn't waste the revelation on them: the futility of imparting our ideas had long been demonstrated. One in thought and purpose, linked by the necessity of combating one hostile fate—a power antagonistic ever—a power we lived to evade—we had no confidants save ourselves."

"One in thought and purpose. . . ." Here, in a paragraph written nearly sixty years ago, we enter precisely the world belonging to Michel and Paulette, to Tabard, Caussat and Colin.

II

Zéro de Conduite does not show its director as a profound technician, but matters of technique do not really matter here, because Vigo used screen images in the way that Paul Eluard used words; they are transfigured in the light of his enormous love. To compare *Zéro* to *Jeux Interdits* from this point of view is like placing an African



Preparation for a revolt. "Zéro de Conduite."

totem image beside a Parian Antinous: they both have their mystery, they both seem to inspire an almost religious fervour, but the first has a natural and infinitely moving poetic violence. *Jeux Interdits* also holds certain other disappointments (the too frequent use of "amusing" peasants, for instance), but these differences are not important enough to damage the thread which links the two films together.

"We *Illuminati* . . .," in both films we are initiated into a great conspiracy: that of children against adults. Paulette and Michel are still young, they do not have at their command all the forces that Vigo's juvenile revolutionaries are able to call up; they are still only children, whereas Tabard and his friends are poised, like birds in the moment before taking flight, between childhood and adolescence. Nor are Michel and Paulette yet capable of giving their attention to a larger world. We are, in fact, being shown two stages of a development: on the one hand the open revolt, on the other the secret game (or society) which is either prior to, or a replacement of, the revolution itself. The seeds, however, are being well planted. Paulette's parents were murdered as pawns in a nationalistic "game" played by men who have reached what we call years of reason. Michel is cut off from his by reason of their stupidity and thick-headedness. Thus the children have already left behind them any adults for whom they might possibly have felt a natural love, and it remains for them to organise a secret game to endow with new and subversive benefits those symbols whose meaning has been debased by the pettiness of adults. The child's detachment from anything which is not germane to his most urgent preoccupations is perfectly illustrated in the sequence which shows Michel's father and his enemy from next door fighting in an open grave. Michel's mother and the "grown-up" children of both combatants stand round squabbling, gesticulating and encouraging. The priest is fetched from the church and, as he stands shocked and angry by the grave, Paulette turns to him, takes one end of his stole in her hand and steadfastly looks at the cross embroidered there. In the midst of all the confusion her face is a mixture of undisturbed interest and perfect, self-contained love.

Jeux Interdits, although it objectively pokes fun at adult religious idiosyncrasies, is not blasphemous because Paulette and Michel have not yet had enough experience of "the world" to make it possible for them to be involved in any way with conscious blasphemy. They are still living

in a world where everything is marvellous, where, as Arthur Machen wrote in his beautiful *Things Near and Far*, "the mountain and the tiny shining stone, the flower, and the brook were all alike the signs and evidences of an ineffable mystery and beauty"; in their case, the mystery and beauty of death—"et hop, comme des chiens."

In *Zéro* a further step is taken, because the boys tie the dormitory master down, tilt his bed up on end so that his head and arms drop down, and stand one of the lantern-hung wooden T's in front of him. Here we have satire aimed at the very heart of Christianity—the crucifixion. The attitude of the boys, and of Vigo, is made equally clear when Huguet, the one sympathetic master, begins to pursue an elegant young woman down the street while he and his charges are out on their communal walk. In the chase she is lost, and Huguet comes face to face with an outraged priest who opens his breviary and frantically mutters prayers. One is reminded of the photograph in *La Révolution Surréaliste* called: *Benjamin Péret Insulting a Priest*.

Both films contain sequences whose emotional effect can only be compared to the ecstasy which we believe certain of the great religious to have obtained in the course of their revelations; although, literally speaking, these sequences have nothing whatsoever to do with religion or its symbolism. In *Jeux Interdits* there is the hushed and annunciatory moment when Michel, having lost Paulette to the police, goes to the abandoned water mill and gives the little girl's necklace to the old, sleepy-eyed owl and tells him to "keep this for a hundred years." As the bird blinks and bows its two-mooned head, the audience seems to catch its breath.

In *Zéro*, an equivalent moment is even more perfect, more ecstatic. In a famous sequence the night-shirted boys, carrying Chinese lanterns, form into a procession and march in slow motion through the drifting feathers from the pillow-fight. One of them flies up into the air and lands on a chair which the others hold up by one leg. Their chanting is distorted on the sound track and, in some ways, resembles Eastern music. In this passage the elements remembered from Catholicism (vestments, bells, censers becoming nightshirts and lanterns slung on wooden T's) seem to have become mixed both with their pure revolutionary ideals and with a sort of Western world equivalent to the astonishing and moving initiation rituals of primitive peoples. Tabard actually underwent a primary ordeal when he rose to his feet and said "*Merde*," first to the gross science master, and then to the headmaster himself.

We have seen that Paulette and Michel are both cut off from their parents and are also surrounded by misunderstanding. Tabard and his friends are isolated at school and closed in by a band of monstrous adult teachers—the bearded dwarf headmaster, the prissy sidling Sourpuss, the hideous, lustful science master. The one common defence left for these children is to have their "heads full of plans and conspiracies." Michel and Paulette content themselves with stealing crosses and making the beautiful travesty of a graveyard where, perhaps, their troubles will be solved and Paulette's muttered mistake, "*le fruit de vos entrailles est blessé*" will be explained. Tabard and his friends aim higher; they make themselves and their schoolyard into a microcosmic reflection of the universe and of the human struggle towards the attainment of liberty—they are the negroes rising in Haiti, Robin Hood and Alan-a-Dale in their wood of "once upon a time," the mystical revolu-

tionaries of the 1840's and the people who destroyed Imperial eagles in the early days of the Russian revolution. In this film's white magic, in the triumphal singing march to the rooftop, we are led to believe that there is ultimate truth in André Breton's great dictum: *Liberté couleur d'Homme*.

III

"Luis Bunuel," said Jacques Prévert in a Homage to *Los Olvidados*, "*n'est pas un montreur d'ombres*." Bunuel's film is made of light, a light cold and pure as crystal, light which casts no concealing shadows. In its beam Bunuel shows us the hideous brand which can be left by the cruelty of the real world when the child is thrown out to face it alone. Jaibo and his gang have forgotten how to play a secret game (except that any gang has something of a secret society about it), and those feelings which might once have led them to the ritual of an ideal revolution were long ago stamped out in the fight to live. The only door left open to them leads to murderous attacks on cripples and blind musicians, to the circumvention of bread-and-sop attempts made by certain adults to bring them back again into the "civilised" world; to dreams in which their leader, smiling terribly, rises from beneath the bed and offers a hank of raw, dripping meat as the desired prize.

Bunuel's theme is embellished with a mad and terrible humour (for the cripple rolling over the pavement is funny, although few people will care to admit it), which contains overtones of a surrealist black humour, the sort of comedy which is present in de Sade's machine for cutting off sixteen heads at one go and in Bunuel's own instructions for the making of *The Giraffe* in its tenth spot: "*there is an appreciable quantity of dough. One is tempted to model it with one's fingers. Carefully concealed razor-blades cause the spectator's hands to bleed.*"* This

* *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, June 1936.

quotation is epigrammatic of *Los Olvidados*: into the world of documentary and sociological movies, fit subject for discussion in the genteel drawing room, Bunuel flung his bomb, together with its terrifying images which bite the eye lately so accustomed to "Hollywood chi-chi"; Jaibo sidling between girders and cacti clawing the sky, the blind man drawing the dove over the sick woman's back, the cruel street fight with Pedro grasping his dagger and choked by the blood which streams across his young-old face.

The lyrical calm which sings out from the faces of Paulette and Michel, the sense of a breaking into new life which *Zéro de Conduite* presents to us with all the morning innocence of a *Peaceable Kingdom* by the Quaker preacher-painter Hicks, cannot here find a place because the real world has taken over a too dreadful command. But in spite of their depredations and cruelties, these delinquents are gentle when they teach each other to smoke, and their eyes have that immense, lost purity which is to be seen in the famous photograph taken of Rimbaud when he was both writing *Les Illuminations* and living at the pitch of depravity.

IV

The three films naturally have exterior differences; their times of production, their *milieux*, their stories, but they were all directed by men whose integrity united their varying temperaments. Vigo made no concessions at all, and his film remains a poem which pays homage to the ideals he most cherished. It has never been equalled, not even by his own *L'Atalante*, which was a poet's attempt to work within a more orthodox commercial framework, and, as James Agee has said, "suggests the strugglings of a maniac in a strait-jacket." Bunuel—under pressure, I presume, of outside circumstances—was not able to say all that he could have wished; thus in *Los Olvidados* we have

(continued on page 54)



Admirers of Jaibo. Bunuel's
"Los Olvidados."



Left: Louis Calhern as Caesar.



Right: James Mason as Brutus.

FILMING JULIUS CAESAR

John Houseman

This article incorporates the greater part of two accounts by Mr. Houseman of the filming of "Julius Caesar" that appeared in *Theatre Arts Magazine* ("This Our Lofty Scene," May, 1953) and *Films in Review* ("On Filming Julius Caesar," April, 1953). We are very grateful to both magazines for permission to reprint this material.

Platform-stage or proscenium-arch, radio, TV, or motion picture—no matter what medium you employ, the problems of effectively presenting an established masterpiece to contemporary audiences remain essentially the same. Time, by itself, has little to do with the case. A three-century-old classic, artfully reincarnated, may establish a more vital and immediate communication with today's public than a modern play revived within its author's lifetime. Shakespeare seems closer to us than O'Neill.

There are two things the producers of a revival must achieve, over and above the normal requirements of an effective dramatic presentation: first, they must cut away the traditional fustian which, visually no less than verbally, tends to collect around the body of a famous work; second, they must, without distorting it, adapt the text and intention of the original dramatist to the technical resources and the psychological climate of their own time. The success of a revival depends largely upon the degree to which the work in question proves itself adaptable to these changing conditions.

For Shakespeare the present time is particularly propitious. Seemingly indestructible though his texts may be, the truth is that for hundreds of years his plays were performed under theatrical conventions totally alien and generally hostile to his own. It is only in the last fifty odd years, with the theatrical use of the electric lighting and under the indirect influence of the other newer electronic media, that we have succeeded in recapturing some of the swift, fluid wonder of the Elizabethan stage.

Of all Shakespeare's plays, *Julius Caesar* benefits from

one further, specific circumstance—the automatic empathy it evokes in modern audiences, to whom gang war among the great is a habitual subject of melodrama, and to whom the tragic conflict between personal ambition and democratic integrity is painfully and dramatically familiar.

When Mercury Theatre put on its modern-clothes, bare-stage *Caesar* in 1937 (a production which used movie technique), the late John Anderson wrote:

"*Julius Caesar* has about it the immediate ring of today's headlines, and the majestic voice of the drama's greatest mouthpiece. One man brooding against Caesar's ambition finds another man to share his thought. The two become four, then six and eight, until they stand around a single man to strike him down to save their liberties. Then one man emerges to stand alone against them and the mob rises and they answer for what they did singly. . . .

"Shakespeare's language presents no incongruity. It is simply released to work its supreme magic in terms of theatre, as if this method had renewed its vouchers of immortality, as if, in fact, a great poet had risen in our midst only yesterday, a poet who understands the *movies*, as profoundly as he does the human heart."

For audiences whose daily news diet was being poisoned by the unchecked growth of Fascist and Nazi power, Orson Welles prepared a script that was as sharp and violent as his production. Since it was clearly impossible to bring the pomp of the Roman state, the city mob's massive violence or, above all, the changing tide of battle onto his small stage, they were handled impressionistically. Out of darkness into the crude electric glare of

innumerable projectors, dark uniformed figures appeared in conflict and vanished with stylised and shocking suddenness. Like all the best of Welles's work, it was magically and brilliantly theatrical.

Now, fifteen years later, I find myself, in a different association, faced with an even greater challenge—that of helping to transfer *Julius Caesar* to the screen.

In preparing this project we started with two assets: the psychological climate for such a drama remains propitious, and, in this new medium, we had no fustian to strip away, no accreted tradition of Shakespearean movie-acting to inhibit us.

This left us free to attack our main artistic problem—that of translating Shakespeare's bloody and turbulent melodrama into a medium where both mass effects and personal conflict can be more closely observed and more fully developed than under the constant and unchanging focus of a playhouse stage. Yet, while exploiting the camera's brooding mobility, we had to be careful never to substitute effect for tension; not to sacrifice—as some Shakespearean movies have—the dramatic unity of the work as a whole.

For these reasons we were particularly fortunate in having as our director and collaborator a man well known for his experience and skill in the writing and staging of intelligent talking pictures. As our work progressed it was Joe Mankiewicz, the movie maker, who proved to be the conservative among us. He it was who held us most severely to a direct and smooth transition from playscript to screen-play; he who insisted, and then went on to demonstrate, that the diverse and special resources of the movie medium should be used not to supercharge or distort but to render Shakespeare's political thriller faithfully and imaginatively for the screen. When we had finished, we found, to our surprise, that we had adhered more closely not only to Shakespeare's text but also to Shakes-

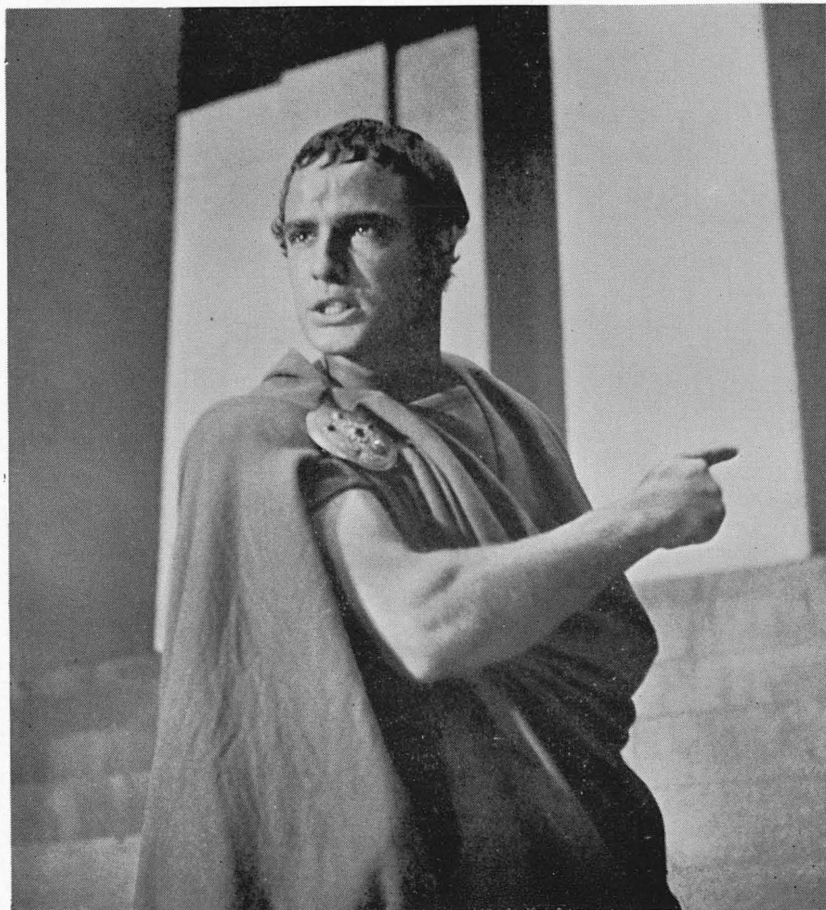
peare's stage directions than would have been possible or desirable on a modern stage.

From the start we set ourselves one basic rule: that at no point must the words or the action of the drama be swamped by "production"—either by spectacular mass or by irrelevant detail. For this reason, in spite of the studio's offer of Technicolor, we chose to film *Julius Caesar* in the familiar and concentrated dramatic tones of black and white.

Our costumes, while authentic in style, are simple and functional. Formal or informal, civilian or military, we tried to give the impression at all times that our actors were men wearing clothes, not characters wearing costumes.

Our sets are architectural: some small, some massive, but all, we trust, dramatically effectual. Our main stage, the Roman forum with the "pulpit" and the long, steep flight of steps leading up to the pillared porch of the Capitol where Caesar is murdered, has the line and scope of great stage design. For years we have all been admiring Gordon Craig's magnificent theatrical conceptions while regretfully realising that their proportions could never be satisfactorily contained within the restricted frame of our modern proscenium arches. In the motion picture *Julius Caesar*, however, we have to a great extent been able to satisfy our hunger for heroic setting. And through the magic power of lens and microphone, registering every syllable and every facial expression, no matter how whispered the voice or how intimate the secret thought, the actors and their conflicts are never dwarfed by their surroundings. Rather, they gain from the set's great size and their own changing and controlled dramatic relation to it.

In sharp contrast to the official magnificence of the Capitol is the sweaty congestion of our Roman slums. Here, as in the later military scenes, it was action, not



Marlon Brando as Mark Antony.



spectacle, we were after, dramatic reality rather than archæological realism. (Not that we weren't pleased the afternoon Vittorio de Sica came onto our set and, walking up our dark and crooked street, asked if we had not copied it from an existing alley in present-day provincial Ferrara rather than from ancient Rome.)

While never deliberately exploiting the historic parallels, there were certain emotional patterns arising from political events of the immediate past that we were prepared to evoke—Hitler, Mussolini and Ciano at the Brenner Pass; the assemblage at Munich; Stalin and Ribbentrop signing the Pact; and similar smiling conference-table friendships that soon ripened into violence and death. Also Hitler at Nuremberg and Compiègne, and later in the Berlin rubble; Mussolini on his balcony with that same docile mob massed below which later watched him hanging by his feet, dead. These sights are as much a part of our contemporary consciousness—in the *black and white* of news-



reel and TV screens—as, to Elizabethan audiences, were the personal and political conflicts and tragedies of Essex, Bacon, Leicester and the Cecils.

There was another challenge of which we were aware, but of which, no matter how carefully we planned, little could be learned until we got into production: the proper visual and acoustical treatment of Shakespearean dialogue on the screen.

In one respect we were fortunate: the action of *Julius Caesar* is swift, concentrated, intense. Thus, we were spared some of the grievous problems that beset the film-maker who undertakes a *Hamlet*, a *Macbeth* or a *Lear*. The cinematic treatment of the soliloquies in *Julius Caesar* presented no hazard, for there are none. The words of Cassius as we watches Brutus' retreating figure and plans his next move to enmesh him, and of Brutus in his orchard at dawn awaiting the coming of the conspirators and reluctantly conceding the necessity for Caesar's murder, were not treated as soliloquies (with sound-track riding over a frozen close-up or the camera wandering across irrelevant scenery), but as highly charged dramatic speech.

The basic problem, of course, was how to transfer the dramatic action of a great playwright whose essential instrument of communication is the spoken word, to a medium in which the auditory is habitually subordinate to the visual. Beyond that, there was the problem of fixing in a permanent print, for projection before diverse audiences separated by time and place, words intended to be spoken directly by living actors to living audiences whose daily mood the actors could gauge and whose measure they could take at each performance.

No matter how carefully and cautiously we rehearsed, with camera and sound crew present, a new hazard faced us when we came to shooting. The layman is probably not aware of the extent to which Hollywood studios have come to rely on voice tracks corrected and put together long after the actual shooting is over. Does a boom squeak or a dolly-track rumble, an arc-light hum or the natural-gas flame in a fireplace hiss? Does distant traffic or a plane overhead or the whir of a ventilator on the next stage throw a faint but pervasive rumble under your most intimate scene? Does an actor fluff a line in a long speech, or mar an otherwise thrilling reading with some slight verbal error? Rather than delay or retake the scene, it is cheaper and more convenient—though not always preferable—to amend the voice track in the sound department by an ingenious system known as "looping," whereby the actor, standing cold before a microphone in a dark room, matches a new voice track, phrase by phrase, to his original image.

For the classic dialogue of *Julius Caesar* it soon became apparent that no such corrective measure could be counted on. The dramatic curves are too long, the tension too high, the speeches too carefully phrased and plotted for them to be splintered, later, into arbitrary fragments. Technically, the proper dramatic delivery of iambic pentameter requires of an actor, in his breathing and in his thinking, a rhythm and a flow that cannot be checked or suspended at the whim of a sound engineer. The necessity to secure a perfect and final voice-track *on the set during shooting*, added several days to our schedule. Precious hours were consumed while rails were adjusted, uneven stage floors levelled, and microphones manoeuvred into the ideal, rather than the possible position. These precautions paid off. In the picture as released, there are not a dozen lines of "looped" dialogue. Every speech is clear and firm, we trust, with the finality of its original delivery.

Top: Cassius (John Gielgud) and Brutus (James Mason).
Below: "Et tu, Brute . . ." Calhern, Mason.

For all our planning and precaution it was inevitable, in making such a picture, that new problems—visual and aural—should have been encountered right through to the last phases of editing and preparing the film for release.

We soon found that a Shakespearean scene, no matter how conventionally shot, is not subject to the normal laws of film cutting. With the intuitive skill of a sensitive editor watching new film running through his moviola, Jack Dunning soon discovered that a Shakespearean scene had certain general rules of its own, differing from those of other movies.

The reaction-shot, for instance, which has long been the basis of dramatic cutting in both silent and talking pictures, becomes a tricky thing to use in editing Shakespearean dialogue. Silent reactions, even when carefully planned by the director to fall in predetermined places during a long speech, were rarely used by the editor, who developed a strong reluctance—born not of veneration for the classics but of sound cutting instinct—to interrupt the line and cadence of a speech in the mouth of one character, by cutting away to the reaction of another. It struck him as arbitrary and false. And he was right. The film, as he worked on it, developed its own proper cutting-rhythm and form. The result was no less sharp of dramatic than other cutting—only different.

Special problems arose for Robert Shirley, our chief mixer, when he came to make the final composite sound track for *Julius Caesar*—perspective, volume, voice-coloration, the balance of voice and sound and music, to mention only a few. Time after time, the conventions of realistic voice-recording and mixing, as generally practised in dramatic pictures, had to give way to a more sustained and lyric treatment. The Forum scene, with its acoustical and dramatic problem of a single human voice fighting and riding the roar of a great mob, while constantly changing not only its volume but also its relation and perspective to the crowd below it, took days of trial and error and tentative combinations of tracks at various levels, before it finally jelled.

No aspect of our production has raised as many ques-

tioning eyebrows as our casting. The choice of Marlon Brando as Marc Antony led some skeptics to quip that "Friends, Romans, Countrymen" might become "Kowalski Variations on a Speech by Shakespeare." A few feet of film will silence, once for all, any remaining doubts as to the quality of Brando's diction. Beyond that, there is no question in my mind that in natural equipment, temperament and application he is one of the very great actors of our time.

For the rest of the cast, Joseph Mankiewicz, Dore Schary and I feel we have fulfilled our original hope—to obtain the best available classic talent on either side of the Atlantic.

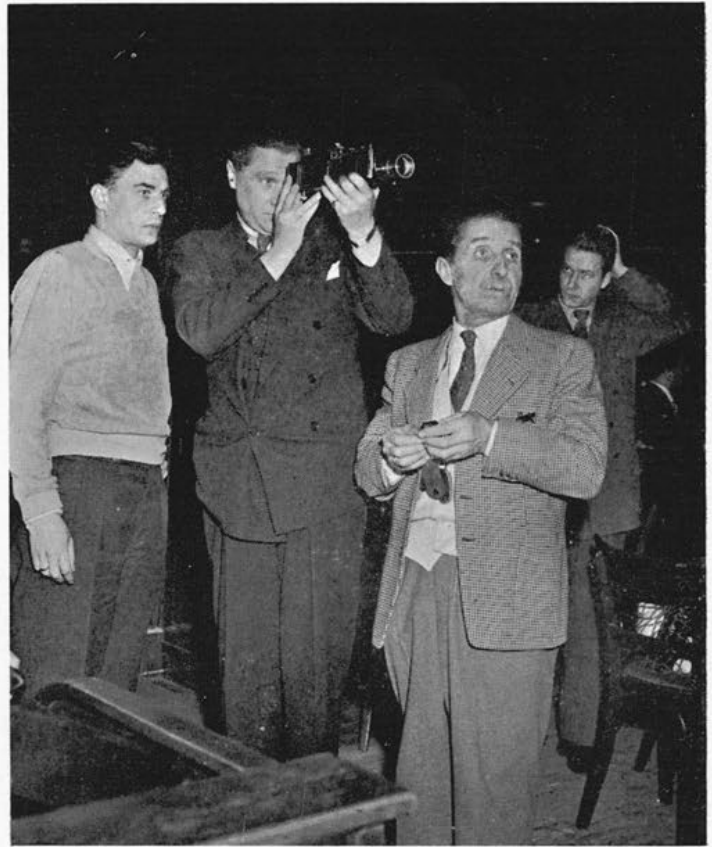
The Cassius of the Stratford Festival, that undisputed master of English dramatic verse, John Gielgud, is our Cassius. For our hero, the noble Brutus, we had never thought of but one man. James Mason, after years of motion picture stardom, is repeating in our picture a part he played at the Gate Theatre in Dublin sixteen years ago. Louis Calhern is, we think, a more human and disturbing Caesar than many of the pompous and hollow dictators of past productions. Douglas Watson, who two seasons ago played Romeo on Broadway, is the young Octavius Caesar. Greer Garson, our Calpurnia, and Deborah Kerr, Brutus's wife Portia, are both actresses trained in the classic tradition.

With such a mixture of talent and temperament we were warned to expect trouble. There was none. Whatever the cause—the pleasure of speaking noble and well-rehearsed lines on a movie set, Joe Mankiewicz's expert and sensitive direction or the pure excitement of the drama itself—the agreeable truth is that we could not have had a happier or more absorbed company. When an actor was not on call, the chances were that one might find him on the set or out on a broiling location, intently watching the performance of his colleagues. When Marlon Brando finished Antony's speech in the forum, nine hundred extras burst into applause—and John Gielgud was leading them.



Carol Reed

Two scenes from his latest film, "The Man Between," a political melodrama set in Berlin. Right: Carol Reed and the unit on location. Below: Mason as the lawyer involved in smuggling refugees from the East to the West zone.



James Mason

The Man Between



Claire Bloom, Hildegard Neff



"Genevieve": Genevieve held up by children on a street crossing. (John Gregson and Dinah Sheridan.)

Film Reviews

GENEVIEVE

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

Since the war, British screen comedy seems to have settled, peacefully and amiably, into something of a groove. The comedy style developed originally by Ealing Studios and more recently taken up, with variations, by Group 3 is one which finds humour in situation rather than in character and which now endlessly exploits the quaint; the thirsty Scots of *Whisky Galore*, the amiable smugglers of *Brandy for the Parson*, the embattled car-drivers of *Laxdale Hall*, the village that plays with trains in *Titfield Thunderbolt*, are united in their distrust of the contemporary enemy, Whitehall, and in their support for private enterprise at its most *outré*. These pockets of rural resistance belong to a pleasant, idealised dream-world. Meanwhile, since the encouragingly satirical *The Rake's Progress*, *Lauder* and *Gilliat* have turned their attention mainly to farce; and Clive Brook's stylish *On Approval* and Robert Hamer's sophisticated and malicious *Kind Hearts and Coronets* have had no successors. What may, perhaps, be called the school of T. E. B. Clarke—a really clever writer who has, inevitably, been none too happily imitated—has enjoyed a long run, and it seems time, if not for a change, at least for a variation. With *Genevieve* this comes from a slightly unexpected quarter, since the director, Henry Cornelius, made his name with *Passport to Pimlico* and then disappointed with the artless *The Galloping Major*.

Genevieve has a hard, urban flavour more familiar from France or America than from a British comedy. The leading characters are a young lawyer and his wife, a rather more prosperous advertising agent and his girl friend, a model. The two men are united by their passion for vintage cars; the two girls strike up an alliance of boredom during the discomforts of the London to Brighton run and of positive misery when a rash bet—the result of the morose lawyer's suspicions of his wife and friend—send the game but aged Darracq and Spyker off on a wild race back to London. The comic incidents are

themselves fairly predictable—endless misfortunes to the cars, a really funny exploration of the horrors of the English seaside boarding-house, a series of masterly and malevolent delaying tactics during the race back, when the two drivers in turn pass and repass each other, roaring with wild and heartless laughter. Wife and girl friend, exhaustedly pushing the Spyker through a watersplash, drenched with coffee as the Darracq lurches forward, protesting dupes of the men's obsessive passion, are principally the victims of these humiliations, which provide some pleasantly tough and ruthless scenes.

William Rose, an authentic discovery as a writer of comedy, makes the domestic bickering of the married couple more graceful and more funny than the familiar American equivalent. It is not the fault of John Gregson and Dinah Sheridan, both competent and likeable players, that they lack the decisive American star quality, or the personality which made *Edouard et Caroline*, for instance, so engaging an exploration of a relationship. Compare their half-serious quarrel in the opening scenes—wife versus car—with the similar scenes between Daniel Gelin and Anne Vernon, or even between Aldo Ray and Judy Holliday in *The Marrying Kind*, and the rough edges of the British piece become most apparent. A completely successful performance, though, comes from Kenneth More, as the defiantly extrovert advertising agent; Kay Kendall, accompanied by a huge, heavy-breathing dog, is at her best in the smartly handled scene when she takes over the trumpet in a night club band. And, among the smaller parts, one notices particularly Geoffrey Keen's traffic cop.

Apart from a brief moment of outright caricature from Joyce Grenfell as a hotel receptionist, the jokes are not, as it were, dragged in, but develop naturally from the interaction of personality and incident. And the film, with the slightly arty mews flat, the dreadful hotel bedroom which shakes and vibrates every time a neighbouring clock strikes the hour, the baroque seafront of Brighton, the suburban approaches to London, places its scenes neatly. Its points are engagingly under-lined by Larry Adler's jaunty harmonica score. William Rose's smartly turned script and Henry Cornelius's vigorously paced direction make *Genevieve* an unusually likeable light weight: one hopes that the partnership will do more.

HOUSE OF WAX, MAN IN THE DARK and BWANA DEVIL

Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

The future, one is led to conclude from those three stereoscopic "Natural Vision" films, shows no signs of working. Of course it was unfair to judge the dramatic possibilities of stereoscopy from a film like *Bwana Devil*, so flat in all except the mechanical sense, so singularly uninviting a precursor. Technically the third dimension has indeed been getting better; though the films have been only weakly gruesome in themselves—a slow, long-winded story of man-eating lions interfering with railroad workers in Africa at the turn of the century, a thriller about a gangster who has a brain operation to remove his criminal tendencies, and a horror picture about a modeller of wax figures who goes mad and uses real corpses to dip into boiling wax—the actual packaging has improved. The most notable advance is in the lighting of *House of Wax* (Warner), which employed two cameramen of distinction, Bert Glennon and Peverell Marley. The fact that polaroid glasses diminish the amount of light on the screen made even the African exteriors in Ansicolor of *Bwana Devil* (United Artists) appear dingy and lifeless, and gave to the black-and-white photography of *Man in the Dark* (Columbia) the quality one might expect from a hastily duped print of a twenty-five-year-old film in rather decrepit condition. In *House of Wax*, though (an inferior remake of the same company's 1932 essay in the macabre, *The Mystery of the Wax Museum*), the Warnercolor is of usual luminosity.

This is, in fact, certainly the slickest of the early deepies; though not much more can be said for it. As hokum it contains occasional delights, but the general level of storytelling suggests a straight regression to the first serials, and the characterisation, dialogue, atmosphere—as in the other two films—are still submerged in the lower reaches of the "B" picture.

That the films themselves should be bad—so bad, it must be confessed, that only abuse or mockery, not criticism, is possible—may not surprise. Many of the early talkies were. But at this point comparison stops, because the new dimension still seems a mechanical trick of no expressive value whatsoever. There is a steady progression in the shock treatment point of view: *Bwana Devil* offered little beyond one spear being thrown at the camera, a couple of lions padding towards it and a face looming out with lips parted for a kiss; *Man in the Dark* advanced to a subjective operation sequence with needles and forceps being jabbed out of the screen, a revolver fired and a chair thrown at the audience, and a climax on a roller-coaster; while *House of Wax*, with "Warnerphonic" sound, recorded the subsequent bump from behind after the chair had been thrown and a number of loudly echoing screams, with visual effects ranging from a man batting a ping-pong ball, controlled by an elastic string, back and forth into one's face, to cancan girls kicking their legs into the stalls.

House of Wax also has none of the distorted perspectives of *Bwana Devil*, and avoids its predecessors' distractions of irrelevant foreground objects jutting out from the screen; the cutting is altogether smoother and the travelling shots more coherent. The stereophonic sound, though, is not consistently employed. The general impression left by the three films is that when the stereoscopic image is discreetly and unostentatiously used one is hardly, after the first reel or two, aware of it—except for a slight feeling of remoteness, which is certainly no dramatic advantage—but that when it is used for sensational effect (spears, chairs, tables, boiling wax, etc., thrown or poured at one), it causes a definite distraction from the drama, and serves only to point up the artificiality of enlarging one dimension at the expense of the other two. Also, on the simple stunt level, M.G.M.'s expeditious revival

of their 1935 anaglyph shorts, *Metroscopix*—although more primitive and tiring to the eyes—have shown that stunts as such are no more sensational today.

Perhaps the most significant failure in these three films is the total ineffectiveness of the roller coaster sequence in *Man in the Dark* when compared with the similar one which opens the Cinerama programme in New York. Setting aside the latter's advantage of Technicolor and superior photography, one realises that the power of its illusion stems from a certain aesthetic justness. The camera's extended point of view, reproduced on the enlarged curved screen, succeeds in projecting one completely into the scene—physical reality becomes, so to speak, the envelope around us that it is in life. But in *Man in the Dark*, apart from the fact that the backgrounds are often out of focus, the proportions are wrong. To see the people on the roller coaster protruding into foreground from the screen does not help to intensify the illusion of what is happening, but to weaken it. We seem to be watching the roller coaster operating within one layer of space, with a further receding layer of space behind it, and the connection between the two is not immediately apparent. The background, the foreground and the audience are three detached, almost isolated factors. The result is that a stunt is needed—something must be propelled or hurled towards us—to remind us that a connection does or should exist; and this doesn't, after all, seem a promising means of dramatic expression.

Footnote: The "Opposition" has now made its début with the "new wide screen" at the Odeon and Leicester Square cinemas and the "giant panoramic screen" at the Empire, where films shot to be projected on screens of ordinary size meet a fate almost worse than death. One hardly imagines the cameraman of *Tonight we Sing* would have enjoyed seeing his images amputated at top and bottom, groupings made to look unnaturally tight, chins disappearing in close-ups, the arms of Toumanova's Dying Swan constantly extending out of frame. Nor did enlargement flatter the rather coarse Technicolor of *Young Bess*, much of which looked out of focus; and with the highly agreeable *Genevieve*, the appealing *Lili*, the effect becomes brutally gross, like a strait-jacket that impedes breathing.



"Due Soldi di Speranza": Mario Fiore. The irresistible vitality of this young, non-professional Italian actress, the easy-going charm of Vincenzo Musolino and Renato Castellani's brilliantly assured control of his material make this comedy of life in a village near Naples (already discussed at length in "Sight and Sound") one of the most enjoyable and stimulating of post-war Italian films.

MAN ON A TIGHTROPE

Reviewed by Karel Reisz

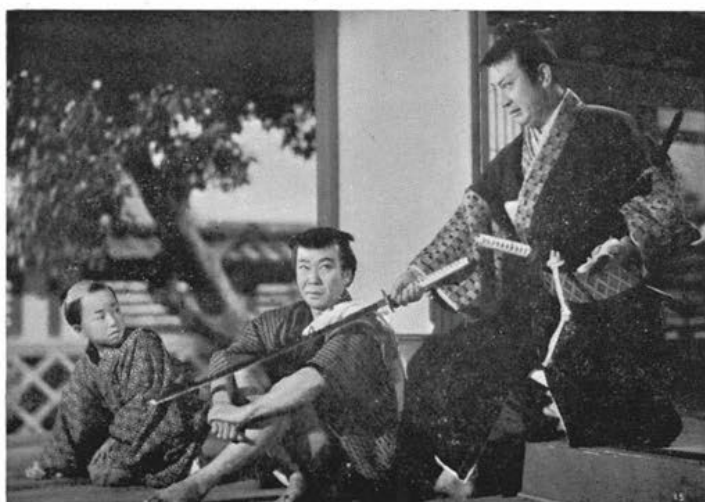
That even the most talented and successful directors are, with varying frequency, obliged to accept subjects in which they can have little real interest is, it seems, part of the scheme of film-making almost everywhere; it happens, perhaps, most often in Hollywood—as most things do—and might as well be accepted. No one, I imagine, would hold *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers* against Milestone or *The Lady from Shanghai* against Welles. All one is entitled to ask is that a director should recognise a chore when he is given one, and snatch the more serious opportunities when they come his way. The less attractive solution is to treat everything with equal weight, to inflate material which, with unpretentious treatment, would remain entertaining box-office fare and no more.

Elia Kazan has been relatively lucky in this respect; his Hollywood assignments so far have nearly all been interesting, and his latest, *Man on a Tightrope* (Fox), has, on the face of it, all the ingredients of a good, topical adventure story. A circus owner in present-day Czechoslovakia decides, when the communist authorities come to restrict his activities—the clown's act must be given political content—to escape into Germany. Because of its unexpectedness, the plan works, and the whole circus, elephants, Chinese jugglers and all, rolls its way over a frontier bridge into Germany.

An adventure of this kind may, of course, deal by implication with serious issues. What is not permissible is a long series of discussions of moral problems, interleaved with bursts of action and written in elaborately "literary" dialogue—in this case the issue is between the commissar's and the "non-political" man's view of life. In Robert Sherwood's script (from a novel by Neil Paterson), the characters have hardly lifted the flaps of their circus tents before they are deep in the middle of simple truths—freedom, intolerance, man's responsibility to man are all soon and smoothly disposed of. The plot's physical manoeuvres are less carefully worked out; in particular a final twist to the story whereby the commissar allows the circus to proceed on its route just to see what happens, is utterly unconvincing.

Kazan brings to this material the qualities one has now come to expect from him: a brilliant and ultimately boring surface efficiency. He succeeds in some cases in getting remarkable performances from his players, but in a way that makes one feel he is "good with actors" rather than that he has a real, a direct response to character. And as a storyteller he now snatches at his climaxes too fiercely (cf. *Panic in the Streets*), overloading everything with layers of indiscriminate atmospheric detail that stifle tension. There seems more than ever something much more genuinely personal about his earlier films, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *Boomerang*, when compared with this inflated virtuosity.

Fredric March contributes one of his quietly authoritative



performances, and Gloria Grahame as the discontented wife is slinky and sullen with good humour. Among the minor rôles, Dorothea Wieck, remembered from *Mädchen in Uniform*, makes the tiny part of an exhausted equestrienne stand out for a few moments. Robert Beatty, an actor evidently not susceptible to Kazan's busy Group Theatre methods, plays a moustache-twirling showman for cheap laughs.

THE STORY OF GILBERT & SULLIVAN

Reviewed by Philip Hope-Wallace

This coloured film, directed by Sidney Gilliat (London Films) will please the unexact and does no harm. It is like a dainty "period" album put out by some good, well established emporium and gives us a lot of the music very nicely done, which is what will ultimately "carry" it with the public. Short of filming Savoy operas entire, which might be tedious—if memories of filmed *The Mikado* can be trusted—the next best plan is to make up a bouquet of some of the less hackneyed scenes bound with a tape record of the "lives" of the collaborators; in short, doing for Gilbert and Sullivan what *Lilac Time* did for Schubert, only with less pain or vandalism, in as much as Sullivan was no Schubert. It might have been more interesting as a film if the back stage story could have been seen with a little more realism: it was, after all, a story with its painful side, not mere musical comedy tiffs and tears, this collaboration between an intensely witty but cruel egoist and a shy, rather vain Jew; and the London where it was enacted was a grim and grubby place, not this Technicolor affair of bustles and red-coats and pearls in the pubs. But this everlasting kind of Victoriana, a hang-over—apparently incurable—from *Bitter Sweet*, was to be expected. What was not was the gauche effort to render down intractable stretches of operetta into something filmic; for instance, the visual accompaniment and antics which accompany the singing of the Lord Chancellor's Nightmare Song, or the notion of letting us hear the entry of Duke of Plaza Toro while watching Gilbert work out positions with cardboard figurines in a model theatre; or *Three Little Maids from School*, as a piece rehearsed in Sullivan's drawing room. These are antiquated devices and stick out clumsily; and the only successful tie-up between stage emotion and the real emotional situation of the Lives is at the end, where the death of Jack Point in *The Yeoman* counterpoints the sad news of Sullivan's death; which is effective enough and a pointer to what might have been. The excerpts from the scores are well done, even though post-synchronisation robs the performers of some vitality in many cases. But the settings of the operas are authentic and their stylised playing, which we know only too well to this day, will satisfy the purists. A large chunk from *Trial by Jury* stands rather by itself near the beginning, and is the occasion for a wholly absurd scene between Sullivan (Maurice Evans) and a young woman who is supposed to disapprove of his light music (Dinah Sheridan's notions of how to enact this rôle are rather embarrassing). Later there are scenes from *Iolanthe* and *Ruddigore*. America comes into it, of course; the company is shown sailing to New York, and Gilbert and Sullivan give an impromptu duet from *The Pirates*, the moment at which we realise that all hold on biographical realism has been abandoned; this is merely a musical comedy within a musical comedy. Robert Morley will provide millions of people with the fancy of what Gilbert ought to have been like, an irascible

"The Impostor": Utaemon Ichikawa (right). The third Japanese film to be shown in London, a straightforward cloak and dagger piece which has had considerable box-office success in its own country, lacks the remarkable qualities of "Rashomon" and "Tora-No-O". But this story of palace intrigues, duels and masquerades attracts through the strangeness of its idiom, its ceremonial settings, and the contrast between the violence of the action and the formal manners of the players.

comedy milord, very far from the truth, but alive in a theatrical way. No other character comes into the round. Peter Finch and Eileen Herlie look worried in the background as the D'Oyley Cartes; Muriel Ake is the latest to have a go at Queen Victoria; the apotheosis of Gilbert in the Palace at the end is not unmoving and there are some well planted laughs here and there. One comes away, as one no doubt should, whistling "Poor wandering one," sung very prettily by Elsie Morrison—I fancy, though one never knows these days.

LES BELLES-DE-NUIT

Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

Since he first left France twenty years ago, René Clair has repeatedly faced the charge that either his films haven't been like *Sous les Toits* and *Le Million* or, if they have, then he has been repeating himself. Certainly his work in England and America suggested a decline, and there was something rather thin and mechanical about the film he made on his return to France, *Le Silence est d'Or*. As it turned out, many of us were ready to fear the worst. But after *La Beauté du Diable* and his new film *Les Belles-de-Nuit* (International), it is clear that those years were a period not of decline but of transition. Of course it is legitimate to prefer the earlier Clair to the later, but to approach his newest work as if the artist were simply trying to recapture the mood of his Parisian comedies with music is unjust and, I believe, irrelevant.

Les Belles-de-Nuit contains elements of the earlier Clair, as there are constant elements in the work of any individual artist, but its material is entirely different. In *Sous les Toits* and the others, a formal pattern was imposed on simple everyday incidents; here, as in *La Beauté du Diable*, the material itself is deliberately formal, and if Clair returns directly to any personal source at all, it is, rather, to one of his first silent films, *Le Voyage Imaginaire*. But his art now is most nearly like that of an eighteenth century philosophical French conte (a period and a manner which he has always admired), and it gives the same kind of pleasure. The characters are not intimately but formally presented; the appeal is one of idea, of intellectual manoeuvring and calculated fantasmagoria.

Clair's struggling musician in a little French provincial town has his aspiring dreams of beauties of the night, and of various periods, who greet him with rapture, not for the author to attempt a psychoanalytical approach to the dream territory, but to "plot" it in the most deliberately artificial manner. Reality and fantasy inter-act, the story moves constantly from one state to the other and back again, each scoring off the other as in a game of chess, and a nice eighteenth century kind of moral finally emerges to the effect that every age always thinks a preceding one was better. There is no attempt at making anything "convincing" on the realistic level; it is obviously improbable that the young man's dreams would be so continuous, so neatly inter-related, and so persistent in mood; that they would all, at the same moment, turn to nightmare; and that, as Clair himself has pointed out, that they should all have been dreamed during a brief period of the hero's life when he was about to receive a letter from the Paris Opera informing him that his work had been accepted.

The tone of the film is light, detached, and civilised, and its humour varies from the charming aside of the serious-looking girl in the post-office who turns up in a dream sequence set two hundred years earlier still wearing her enormous horn-rimmed specs, to the brilliantly devised episode in which the hero dreams he is conducting his opera, the orchestra playing with road drills, hack saws, vacuum cleaners and other domestic implements. The skill with which Clair interleaves dream and reality is often prodigious; he plays a series of witty conjuring tricks on the cinema. Where *Les Belles-de-Nuit* is inferior to its eighteenth century models is in its element of repetitiousness. It hasn't the unflawed concentration so necessary to this kind of art, and the stylised settings could have contributed more positively and elegantly to the dreams; the final chase in reverse from the stone age—though it begins with a deliciously glimpsed monster—to the present also strikes too farcical a note.

Gérard Philips, exactly right in appearance and temperament for the hero, plays with a beautiful subtlety, and his



"Belles de Nuit": the musical nightmare.

band of harassed friends, acted by Raymond Bussières, Jean Parédès and Raymond Cordy, are perfect; Van Parys' music is attractive and, especially, Clair's own lyrics for it have a real poetic charm and grace. *Les Belles-de-Nuit* seems to me as a whole, in spite of imperfections, to consolidate the development of Clair. Like Chaplin he has had his uncertain period and emerged as personal and as alive as ever.

THE MEDIUM

Reviewed by Roy Edwards

To his talents as composer and librettist Gian-Carlo Menotti has added another, for (in collaboration with Alexander Hammid) he directed this film version of his own opera, and the results show that he has an intuitive understanding of what is needed in his new craft. To the up-till-now dreary group of filmed operas he has added one which is alive, original and authentic.

Mme. Flora (Marie Powers) is a terrifying fake medium. In an apartment full of fascinating junk—magic charts, bead curtains, stuffed owls, shop window dummies, oleographs of the Virgin of the Bleeding Heart—she lives with her daughter Monica (Anna Maria Alberghetti) and Toby (Leo Coleman), a mute gipsy servant she found in the streets of Budapest. She gives a seance to Mr. and Mrs. Gobineau, the bereaved parents of a baby, and to Mrs. Nolan whose daughter died "just a year ago." All the "supernatural" effects are made by Toby, levitating the table and rattling a tambourine, and Monica who, helped by a gauze robe, mirrors and a secret door, imitates the dead daughter and the baby's laughter. Suddenly Mme. Flora leaps out of her fake trance: she has felt a hand on her throat. But nobody will admit to having done this and the visitors retreat before her rage, singing the magnificent and dirgeful trio "But why be afraid of our dead."

Mme. Flora realises that her trickery has turned on her, that, in tampering with the unknown, something uncanny really has happened. In an attempt to exorcise her terror she decides that Toby saw, or knows something about the hand. Despite

her cajolings and whippings he refuses to concur with this lie and eventually she turns him out. Left alone she drinks and sleeps, thinks she hears a phantom voice singing. Toby creeps back to see Monica again. He knocks over a gramophone horn and, as Mme. Flora wakes, hides behind a curtain. Drowsy and terrified she realises that something is there. She takes out a revolver and fires at the curtain. As Toby twists dying to the floor she crows triumphantly: "I've killed the ghost. I've killed the ghost." Monica, roused by the noise, runs out calling for help and leaves Flora gazing into the mute's dead eyes, asking "Was it you?" We realise that she will be haunted by this moment, and its secret.

I would emphasise that this is not, as Philip Hope-Wallace once wrote in *SIGHT AND SOUND*, one of "those ghastly operatic films from Italy through which we sit . . . while the camera-eye roves about trying to avoid staring straight at the seat of the shindy, which is to say the baritone's belly."

From this point of view there are several reasons why *The Medium* should be an outstanding film—the influence of Menotti's own elegant and terrifying imagination; an opera by him is not yet such a sacred object that it cannot be changed enough to make it impressive on something other than the stage of an opera house; Menotti has avoided that compromise, which is present in most operatic films, between a filmic and theatrical realisation. In other words this is an opera for the screen and a film in its own right, not just a visible and too audible record of certain performers.

The film establishes its style at the very beginning with a long-held close-up of Marie Powers waiting outside the door of one of her victims. The camera then follows her through palatially ruined tenements, past beggars and a circle of children singing a charmingly religious sentimental song, until she arrives in her own alleyway. And then, suddenly, we are taken to her apartment, where Monica adorns the fantastic Toby with silks, jewels and ostrich feathers.

This effective use of background, visual and aural, occurs all the way through, but it is, above all, the terrible or grotesque moments which fix themselves in the memory: Flora dropping hot candle wax onto Toby's closed eyes, where it slowly whitens; Toby, lost in the fairground, being confronted by two dwarfs with an atrocious bird; Flora's fear when she wakes from her drunken sleep and the slowly spreading stains on the curtain.

Anna Maria Alberghetti makes a very appealing but, in the end, rather negative characterisation, although her voice, at least to my technically untrained ear, has an undeniable purity. The film belongs, as did the stage production, to the incredible Marie Powers. Trailing false hair, paint, paste jewellery and liquor bottles, she storms and weeps her way through the film, the apotheosis of a magnificent and tragic seediness. Almost as striking is the beautiful miming and dancing of Leo Coleman, with the face of a haunting and hunted faun, as he writhes round the apartment in the frenzy of a subdued, not quite born, eroticism.

Mme. Flora and her entourage are more than ably supported by Belva Kibler, gaunt as an El Greco saint, who sings Mrs. Nolan, and Beverly Dame and Donald Morgan as Mr. and Mrs. Gobineau. Indeed these three, originally the mourners who are tricked by Flora, become a chorus of avenging Eumenides, flailing the medium with their assured belief in those powers upon which she had so cynically lived.

Menotti made *The Medium* independently in Rome, on a small budget, and wisely sought the collaboration of such talents as Wakhevitich for the decors and Alexander Hammid, a documentary director and cameraman of experience. Under his guiding hand, *The Medium* does not take over a ready made world, it creates its own, and we implicitly believe that in this world people sing instead of talk.

IN BRIEF

THE VILLAGE (International). *The Village* is Pestalozzi in the Swiss Alps, where war orphans from all over Europe are cared for in an international settlement: a good subject for a documentary, a good setting for a feature, but not, unfortunately, for this particular combination of sentimentality and melodrama. The main story-line concerns the determination of the Polish Government to remove their children from the village, incidentally breaking up a love affair between a Polish teacher (Norwegian Eva Dahlbeck) and a blazered young Englishman (John Justin), and inadvertently causing the

death of a little boy who runs away, finds himself in the middle of a noisy Swiss carnival and—reminded by the racket, not unjustifiably, of the Warsaw bombing—topples from a narrow ledge. The naïvely melodramatic handling of this sequence is equalled by that of an earlier episode, when a little girl, suspected by the others of being a German, is chased from the village by a group of hysterical children armed with stones. A film on such a subject should, one feels, primarily concern itself with showing the experiment at work; a school picnic and an unduly lengthy excerpt from an end-of-term entertainment are almost the only indications that Pestalozzi is not normally a centre of alarm and international intrigue. *The Village*, an Anglo-Swiss production which was completed in British studios, is, disappointingly, the work of Leopold Lindtberg, director of the admirable *The Last Chance* and *Four in a Jeep*. The uninspired handling of both child and adult players and the well-meant mistreatment of a potentially admirable subject make this a film one would prefer to forget.—Penelope Houston.

I CONFESS (Warners). The scene is Quebec. It is dark, and the Castle looms against the sky. As the credits fade, we see a deserted street, a flight of steps, at the top of which a portly, enigmatic figure hurries mysteriously by.

The figure is Alfred Hitchcock's, making its traditionally brief appearance in this his first film for two years. Its earliness represents a stroke of superb self-confidence. Eagerly one anticipates the precision, the perfect timing of effects, the beautiful agonies of suspense—all those qualities which have made Hitchcock a master in his own genre. Alas, the mastery ends with the early sequences; the rest lapses into highly polished, often stylish ordinariness.

We watch a figure wearing a priest's cassock leave a house and disappear down the street; through the open window we catch a glimpse of the murdered man. His assassin is a German refugee, gardener and odd-job man employed at the presbytery of the local Catholic church. On his return, he is seen entering the church by his friend the priest (Montgomery Clift), to whom he confesses his crime, but he refuses to give himself up to the police. Bound by the silence of the confessional, the priest cannot speak—even when he himself is arrested and tried for the murder.

It is a situation worthy perhaps of the late Georges Bernanos, but not, one would have thought, the ideal Hitchcock subject. And this, indeed, proves to be the case. Far too much time is wasted in exploring by flashback the relationship between the priest and the politician's wife (a blonde Anne Baxter). Although this provides the police with a motive for the murder and evidence upon which to arrest the priest, the question of what really happened in the summerhouse is surely subordinate to the main subject—that of the priest torn between fear for his own neck and the sanctity of his vows. It is here, in creation the tension within and between the characters, that the director and the writers (George Tabori and William Archibald) fail. They have their success, of course, particularly in those excellently written scenes between priest and detective (Karl Malden); but never for a moment does one feel that any of these characters have lives they lived before the events of the film and must go on living afterwards. Having rejected any plot mechanism which would have enabled him to create suspense, Hitchcock can only offer a high surface polish in its stead, and this is no substitute for humanity. *I Confess* is not constructed as one of his superb shock-machines, and because of this its improbabilities and shallow characterisations disturb us.

Of course there are some fine things—the horror of the murderer's confession, the courtroom scene with its quiet tensility (Dimitri Tiomkin's musical clichés are for once sparingly employed) and dignified conversational tone, so that Clift's denial of the murder rings out like a cry of despair, and the beautifully stylised shots in the "first love" flashback, soft focus being used legitimately and with telling effect.

There is an interesting cast. Karl Malden's detective is a nicely keyed performance, O. E. Hasse plays the murderer with one eye on the Peter Lorre style, Anne Baxter gives a *Collier's* magazine performance of a *Collier's* magazine character—the only thing to do under the circumstances. As the priest, Clift conveys noble integrity and little else, but this is the fault of the convention, not the actor. Poker-faced saintliness seems *de rigueur* for Hollywood priests.—David Fisher.

NOTES ON ROBERT BRESSON

Gavin Lambert

"Difficult," probably, is the word for Bresson's films; difficult because the experience they communicate is not only a personal but a fairly private one. Such a degree of privacy is rare in the cinema, and rarer still its uncompromising, classical austerity of expression. Cocteau in *Orphée* was unveiling a personal as much as a Grecian myth, but it so happens that many symbols of his private world—its apparatus of melodrama, after all, is familiar to the cinema—are known to our public one and so easily recognisable. To find a parallel with Bresson one has to go back to Dreyer—a parallel that has perhaps been over-stressed (since Bresson denied having seen *Jeanne d'Arc* until a year after he made *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*) but which, all the same, exists.



Like Dreyer, Bresson has been able to make very few films—so far, three in ten years—and obliged to abandon several projects; like Dreyer, he insists on dominating his actors—as a sculptor models his clay, a French journalist remarked; and, like Dreyer, his films have an extraordinary inner concentration, a dedicated quality, stripped of all external concessions, implacably penetrating, and examining the human face, the dramas that may be expressed in it, not so much under a microscope as an X-ray machine.

It is hardly surprising that Bresson has found it difficult to work within the commercial framework of cinema, though the scope of his projects demands its resources; neither his point of view, nor his temperament, nor his methods, are likely to command large audiences. His first two films, *Les Anges du Péché* (1943) and *Les Dames*

Studies in faces. Top : Jany Holt as Thérèse in "Les Anges du Péché" : centre, Maria Casares as Helene in "Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne" : below, Claude Laydu as the young priest of "Journal d'un Curé de Campagne".



du Bois de Boulogne (1945), were not financially successful, and that he has achieved a kind of orthodox recognition with *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* (1950) is due not to any change in approach, any compromise—on the contrary, it is perhaps the most unyieldingly disciplined of all his films—but to the book being a popular modern classic. Most people, in France at least, one suspects, came to see the film of the book, and by no means all of them liked it. Certainly when I first saw it in Paris nearly three years ago, after having to queue for half an hour in the middle of the afternoon (it was then in its third month), the audience was perplexed and restless; a full house at the beginning was depleted by at least a third at the end.

II

Hitchcock once remarked that the art of commercial film-making was to know just how far you could go; and Bresson, for a popular audience, starts where Hitchcock leaves off. He has had less a career in films than a crusade, and though it seems unlikely that in popular terms he will ever achieve more than the ambiguous





The Bresson image : "Les Anges du Péché."

success of *Journal d'un Curé*, he has with three films established himself as the most original film-maker of his generation.

Born about forty years ago, he was first a painter; became interested in the cinema, was encouraged by René Clair, then joined the French army at the outbreak of the 1939 war, and was in a German prison camp for a year and a half. At the end of 1941 he met Father Raymond Bruckenberg, who suggested to him the idea of a film about the Sisters of Bethany. They worked out a story in collaboration with Jean Giraudoux, who wrote the dialogues, and for nearly two years tried to interest producers in it. Finally, Gaumont bought the script but "postponed" production, and it was due to the enterprise of Roland Tual, who acquired the rights from Gaumont, that *Les Anges du Péché* was not only made but made exactly as Bresson intended it.

Bresson has since remarked that he does not believe "technique," in the accepted sense of the word, exists; he prefers "L'écriture." "An author writes on the screen, expresses himself by means of photographed shots of variable length, and from variable angles. On an author worthy of the name, a choice is imposed, dictated by his calculations or his instinct, never by chance. For him, and for him alone, once he has worked out his découpage, each shot he takes can have only one definite angle, one certain length of time." *Les Anges du Péché* certainly gives this impression, and its mastery is none the less remarkable, especially for a first film. The story, set in a convent of the Dominican order founded by Father Lataste, whose chief work is the admission of women criminals as novices on their release from prison, centres on the relationship between an over-eager young sister and an apparently irredeemable girl whose soul she is determined to save; and, though it has a few of the kind of conventional elements that Bresson was later to reject entirely, already they cannot be accepted on a conventional

dramatic level. This is precisely the level that interests Bresson least, and why, no doubt, the film was not popular. For the not always successful plot contrivances are quite obliterated by the film's main purpose, the delineation of a spiritual conflict, exactly analysed, between two young women, against a richly described background of convent life—its ritual, its dedication, its formidable self-discipline and, at times, ruthlessness.

Sister Anne-Marie (Renée Faure), who has given up a well-to-do middle-class home and a fond, self-indulgent mother to enter the order, has led a life almost devoid of personal experience; certainly evil is a conception, not a reality, for her. She does not understand it, she is frightened of it, but when she encounters it in Thérèse (Jany Holt)—a violent and embittered girl, unjustly sentenced, who kills the man who betrayed her, and takes refuge in the convent as a novice—she cannot let it alone. She wants, explicitly, to "reform" Thérèse—but as much, one feels, for the sake of eradicating wickedness as of Thérèse; desperately over-anxious about it, she is sensitive to Thérèse's indifference and provocations, and as the drama intensifies Anne-Marie's struggle becomes a struggle with herself. She is drawn to Thérèse because Thérèse has experienced all that side of life utterly closed to her: crime, violence, sex, poverty. She is horrified by it, but she must defeat it. Then, at the end, after Thérèse's rebuffs have driven her to a nervous obsession, to defiance, rage and spiritual pride, after she has been obliged to leave the order but wanders round the convent all the next night during a thunderstorm, after she has been brought back dying, Thérèse and Anne-Marie almost change sides; too weak to read her reception into the order herself, Anne-Marie has Thérèse read it for her, and Thérèse, "converted" by Anne-Marie's sacrifice and faith, gives herself up to the police. She will return after serving her sentence and, no doubt, be equally zealous, though wiser, in "reforming" others.

A girl leaving prison to shoot her associate in crime: a distracted ex-novice wandering round the convent during a storm at night; a final renunciatory walk to the police waiting with handcuffs. . . . These elements do not sound particularly uncompromising, yet Bresson's treatment of them provides a key to the film, and to his style. In each case a highly charged moment is related with a kind of impassive interior force, without any external emphasis. The girl shooting her lover is brilliantly, unexpectedly handled in one shot; Thérèse rings the bell at the apartment door, the shadow of the opening door crosses her figure as she stands against the corridor wall opposite, a voice off-screen is heard saying "*Bonjour*," she replies "*Bonjour*," then is pointing the revolver and fires it three times. Anne-Marie's collapse has an equally stringent economy. She is on her knees in the cemetery garden at night, her face intent and desperate, she apostrophises and pleads with God, half praying, half justifying herself, lightning flashes across the screen, raindrops fall on her face, she gives a little cry, continues her monologue, then suddenly falls forward. That is all. This concentration on the human face, revelation of situation through it, is Bresson's particular unrivalled gift, and he has developed it with each film.

Les Anges du Péché is in other ways less spare than its successors because of its almost exotic settings. The convent rooms and corridors, all white-walled, the black and white habits of the sisters luminously patterned against them, inspire a series of exquisite formal groupings, finely executed by Agostini's camera; the sisters' smooth insinuating movements, the rituals—their sudden abasements, prone to the floor, the frightening scene of the *correction fraternelle* when Anne-Marie knocks at the doors of the sisters' rooms in turn and asks to be told of her faults—and the beautifully insistent repetitions of black against white, create a draughtsmanship with something oriental in its precision and remoteness. This is a

society no less strange for being taken so completely for granted. There are some fine character portraits—Sylvie's *Mère Prieure*, patient, resigned, solitary, Marie-Hélène Dasté's angular and dominating *Mère Saint-Jean*, Sylvia Monfort's reformed novice, eagerly grateful and pathetically weak; and, at the centre of the film, Renée Faure subtly develops her interpretation of Anne-Marie, elated with the first stages of her renunciation, increasingly driven in on her own inexperience as she discovers the harsher disciplines of her vocation and the obsession of Thérèse.

The fine assurance of Bresson's handling cannot mask certain flaws in the scenario—most notably, the briefly interpolated passages of the police inquiry into the murder, where the plot skeleton shows too thinly through—and in Jany Holt's Thérèse, which begins well, but cannot rise to the crucial demands of the character. In its overriding unity, though, and strongly personal temperament, *Les Anges du Péché* is unmistakably the work of a unique self-critical artist. This style, this *écriture*, is perhaps immediately remarkable for its fastidiousness—but a fastidiousness in the rejection of all impure, all facile elements, not in elegance or refinement for its own sake. Although the background gives it a pictorial richness that can be admired for itself—groupings, compositions, can look striking out of context, which is not to be the case with Bresson's next two films—the emotional force lies completely within the images of faces. Bresson is to dominate, to mould his actors more arbitrarily in his succeeding work, but already the handling of Renée Faure, of Sylvie (who have never equalled these performances in the cinema), and above all of Jany Holt, whose playing is generally much cruder, shows his distaste for any conventionally theatrical flavour in playing; a face has to speak, to dissimulate, to lay bare its character all the time. No mannerisms, no decoration, no flattery—metaphorically, at least, he cuts their hair, leaves their features



The Bresson image: "*Les Anges-du Péché*."

naked, as Dreyer did with Falconetti. After *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* he is to use only little-known players; anyone with a suspicion of "star" quality will bring something false and irrelevant.

With the movement and the rhythm of the film dictated by its inner development, many of the cinema's devices—above all, editing as a dynamic property—are jettisoned. On the surface the pace of Bresson's films looks inflexible, and yet any external variations would distract from the rigours of the "exploration within." Every film, he has remarked, requires its "uniform"—and, above all, no fancy dress. This uniform becomes, as it were, a garment for the soul: the alternating blacks and whites of *Les Anges du Péché*, the almost abstractly formal costumes of *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, the severe black robes against grey wintry landscapes and anonymous interiors in *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*. "Nous poussons l'amour du style jusqu'à la manie. . . ."

In the construction of a sound-track, the same classicism: the dialogue in each of these films has a lucid, precise, condensed quality, and in each case is created by a writer of high and meticulous literary skill, Giraudoux, Cocteau, Bernanos. There are no concessions to naturalism, which again would distract. The same composer, Jean-Jacques Grünenwald, has written the score for each film in a spare, strict, unsensuous style (except for the Anne-Marie "theme" in *Les Anges* which seems to me too conventional), and natural sound is used in an arbitrary, succinct manner: usually as a reminder of a world outside the world of the film, momentarily impinging upon it—the ominous, fatal whirr of the electrically-operated prison gates closing when Thérèse attempts her escape, street sounds that intermittently pierce the walls of Hélène's apartment in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, the muted rattle of the old man's lawnmower while the priest is talking to the Countess in *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*.

III

The character of Anne-Marie expounds Bresson's favourite protagonist, the dedicated, haunted, isolated self-questioning hero or heroine, to whom all human communication seems to become increasingly painful, and whose eye is fixed on a horizon that others cannot see. In his next film, *Les Dames*, this dedication is profane. An attempt at a *tour de force*, it is a film quite without precedent, but in retrospect it appears the least complete of Bresson's films. Based on an episode in Diderot's novel *Jacques le Fataliste* (1773) the story, with dialogue by Cocteau, is set in contemporary Paris (though the backgrounds are so pared down that all we see of Paris is, briefly, part of the Bois de Boulogne). *Les Dames* are a mother and her daughter (Lucienne Bogaërt and Elina Labourdette) used by a rich society woman (Maria Casarès) in a scheme of revenge against the lover (Paul Bernard) who has grown tired of her. Agnès, the daughter, has fallen into night club "entertaining"; Hélène rescues her, sets her and her socially aspiring mother in a flat in the Square de Port-Royal, and then introduces Agnès to Jean, the lover she now detests. Deceiving both sides, so that Jean never learns about Agnès's past and Agnès believes she will lose him if she confesses it, Hélène manoeuvres them into marriage. All too obvious former associates of Agnès (invited by Hélène) mingle with other guests at an expensive wedding, and Hélène is able

triumphantly to tell Jean: "Vous avez épousé une grue. Elle était 'danseuse,' mon cher. . . ."

Bresson contrives to tell this extraordinary story entirely through the characters as they reveal themselves in a series of encounters mainly pre-arranged by Hélène; everything exists within a powerful, mesmeric vacuum; what the characters do outside their particular situation is never indicated—their social positions emerge elliptically, their friends or acquaintances are never shown except collectively, anonymously at the night club and the wedding—and the action takes place almost entirely within two apartments.

In a scene reminiscent in style of Anne-Marie's hysteria in the storm at night, Hélène is shown awakening in bed the morning after she has extracted Jean's confession that he no longer cares for her; her maid comes in, she instructs her to tell anyone who telephones that she is out, and then she says, looking at the camera, "Je me vengerai!" And that, again, is all.

From this moment the narrative is dictated by Hélène's obsession. Nothing occurs that does not spring directly from it—she apparently has no qualms, no distractions, no other commitments, and certainly no relaxations; and to heighten the effect of, as it were, a formal distillation of life, a quintessence of a particular essence, the characters are costumed with determined unreality. Hélène, with her enormous eyes and long, dark hair, wears a long, black velvet evening gown most of the time, even dines in a leopard skin toque. Agnès has only two costumes, her night club outfit and a simple, plain dress over which she wears a shabby belted coat. Invited to dinner by Hélène, Mme. D. arrives heavily veiled, and removes neither hat nor veiling throughout the meal.

All this creates the impressions of ritual figures engrossed in a ritual drama, a kind of human equation, in which nothing is presented on an ordinary, naturalistic level; nothing, that is, until the end, when in the final scene between Jean and Agnès they succeed in emerging intact from Hélène's duplicities and find they can still love and trust each other. Here direct emotion breaks, or is intended to break, through, and that it doesn't is due partly to Paul Bernard's performance—an intelligent but frigid actor, badly miscast (the part was intended for Alain Cuny), he is stiff and uneasy throughout—and partly because the transition to a scene of direct emotional intensity needed a flexibility that Bresson was not prepared to give it. Although at last his two characters are, for the first time in any scene in the film, managing an affirmation, an episode of tenderness, the handling remains unremittingly distant and formal.

Thus, at the end, one is left with an equation brilliantly, intricately stated and incompletely solved. In the sheer concentration on character, the elimination of all extraneous detail, the film fascinatingly continues and intensifies the method of *Les Anges du Péché*; if it slightly overplays the formality—in Casarès' costuming and coiffure, which is a little too bizarre, the authority, the burning obsession of her performance overrides this obstacle. In fact, she is too strong for the others. They are supposed finally to break the vacuum, the last image is their image, but it leaves us still in the bleak, fierce, haunted world of Hélène.

IV

For *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, Bresson's starting-

point was an author surprising after Giraudoux and Cocteau; but what he made of Bernanos' central character, the lonely, uncertain, pre-destined young country priest of Ambricourt, "*prisonnier de la sainte agonie*," shows the choice to have a firm inner logic. The protagonist, once again relentlessly isolated, striving, weighed down with an obsessive suffering, offered perhaps the greatest challenge; for his creation involved also a portrait of a kind of saint, a mystic, a person with an inner life of great richness, privacy and pain, most elusive for the camera to realise. Also, it offered another opportunity for an experiment in construction, in *écriture*; the diary form—again, one would have thought, demanding an almost impossible extension of the camera's dramatic resources, relying as it does on a monologue, interior and exterior, by a character mainly passive. Bresson, however, seems to have been certain of his style from the first. "Within the mind," he remarked to a French interviewer, Jean Douchet, while shooting the film, "the camera can grasp anything. . . ." The photography, he informed him, would be plain, unsophisticated—"no effects," of course; he intended to preserve the structure, the proportions, much of the dialogue of the original; and the backgrounds—the film was shot entirely on location, interior and exterior—would be "very little seen, but their presence will be known, and that is enough. . . ."

Only after seeing the film does one understand exactly what Bresson meant, and how difficult it would have been to be more explicit. "Within the mind" is an imponderable, resisting analysis or exposition; it is there; the "method" that communicates it—the elimination of everything external, descriptive, decorative—can be appreciated, but the method does not explain the inspiration, the interior strength. Technically—not in the sense that Bresson has despised the word, but, as he has said, in the sense that "*la construction a la valeur d'une idée*"—the result is a masterpiece; and, because the technique is indeed worth the idea, the film itself deserves that title.

Bresson has retained all Bernanos' central scenes; the intrigues at the Count's château, the "conversion" of the Countess, the consoling dialogues with the Curé de Torcy, the mischievous and adoring child Séraphita, the young priest's discovery of his illness, his journey to Lille, the visit to the squalid lodgings of his friend Louis, a defrocked priest, and the death. . . . What he has added is, mainly, his own temperament. For the film has a quality of exaltation, of inner revelation about it, not in fact present in Bernanos; the novel's tone is more detached and, at the same time, closer to physical realities. It is profoundly grim. Bresson gives the film a texture more complex, more poetic; everything seen is, so to speak, conveyed through the eyes of a visionary, the exterior world filtered down, real and visible and yet at one remove; the images are two-toned—Burel's photography, arrived at, apparently, after interminable testing, has a hypnotic softness and delicacy, a gentle wintry quality that suffuses the whole film, and against these grey landscapes and interiors the human faces are caught in close-ups of a rigid clarity and power. One has the feeling that Bresson was more personally engaged with his central character and his predicament, for his portraiture of the young priest's agonies, secret doubts and contemplations, reflected in the anxious lineaments of Claude Laydu's face, produces an intimate and profound concretion of experi-



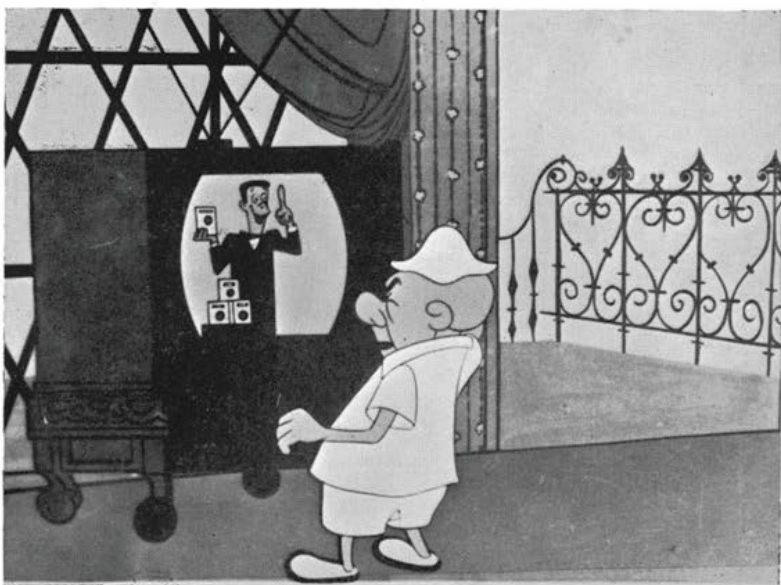
"*Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*." Claude Laydu, André Guibert.

ence. The method goes beyond the analytical, and the camera is admitted to the confines of a soul. The images it captures there take on the aspect of a visual meditation,

This soul, this hero, is one of the most remarkable that the cinema has yet given us; for once a character is not externally memorable; the fact of Laydu is haunting not for itself but for what it expresses. Lonely, uncertain, and yet exalted; young, and yet fixed and set; it has a mysterious fervour and dedication that grows more urgent, and more self-contained, as the hostility of a primitive little village asserts itself; it is doomed, and yet will not be forgotten; for it carries its mystery away with it, and it is a mystery which even those of us who do not share, or want to share, would like to understand. *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* is not, as someone has remarked, a film about religion, but about faith. Though it has (like *Les Anges du Péché* and, in its profane way, *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*) the physical and spiritual masochism to be found in so much modern Catholic art, though some of its agonies go beyond ascetism, it also possesses a genuine nobility. That Bresson's inspiration is a Christian and a Catholic one, and that it is the only one seriously at work in the cinema today, is evident; more remarkably, it stems from a pure, elevated and classical tradition. It is free from the repelled fascination with back-stairs squalor so disconcertingly revealed in the puerile and furtive concoctions of *The Living Room*, as from the gnawing, self-immolating "guilt" of Mauriac's families depressingly populating the Bordeaux district. It is joined, in fact, to the tradition of exalted pessimism which, unsparing though it is, derives from affirmation, from intrinsic faith; from love. It is a kind of love the cinema very seldom portrays, bound up as it is with a stringent self-renunciation, a mortified denial of the world and the flesh (and perhaps *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* even springs partly from a rejection of a "human" love); it is not the kind of love for many of us; but, hermetically sealed off though it may be, its voice and its particular ecstasy are unmistakable.

"La douleur a cessé tout à coup. Elle était d'ailleurs si régulière, si constante que la fatigue aidant je sommeillais presque. Lorsqu'elle a cédé je me suis levé d'un bond, les tempes battantes, le cerveau terriblement lucide, avec l'impression—la certitude—de m'être entendu appeler. . . ."

(BERNANOS, *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*.)



Two Premieres :

DISNEY & U.P.A. David Fisher

Amid the familiar huffle-muffle of film publicity, premières, and 3-D horrors, two recent events are worthy of note, if only because they seem to suggest the beginnings of a change, or at any rate a new development, in public taste. The two events in question are the arrival of Walt Disney's new full-length cartoon, *Peter Pan*, and the première at the Cameo News Theatre in Charing Cross Road of the latest Mr. Magoo cartoon, *The Dog Snatcher*. What is significant is not that *Peter Pan* should have been berated by critics in general, although the Disney True Life Adventure short on the same programme won undivided applause, but that Mr. Magoo should have been deemed worthy of a première at all; albeit a première in name only, without newsreel cameras and the rest; still a première. Though it would be a mistake to see in this a definite withdrawal of public favour from Disney and its bestowal on the U.P.A. group, the creators of Mr. Magoo; something has happened. A new cartoon character has arisen to rival Donald Duck, Goofy and Pluto; a new cult is forming; a new word is perhaps already being minted, "Magooism," describing benevolent near-sightedness.

With regard to the first première, *Peter Pan* is neither very much better nor much worse than Disney's other attempts upon English children's classics. But then in this case the result matters less than in the past; the play is after all only a classic, as it were, by parental consent. As expected, Disney brings to Barrie's fairy tale his comic strip mind and sentimental vulgarity. The result is Super-man—or Super-Pan. The mistiness, the rather dowdy fantasy, are lost: a not very convincing romp with Indians, pirates, etc., remains. Personally, I was not shocked by the film, only disappointed. For Disney has done this sort of thing so often before, and with more style. Old tricks are repeated; one recognises mannerisms. The characterisation, for one thing, is all too familiar: the Lost Boys are only cruder versions of the Dead End kids in *Pinocchio*; the Pirate Crew and the Darling Children, too, one has seen before, stereotyped grotesques and cuties; Wendy, of course, is Alice, is Disney's eternal semi-adolescent girl. Nor did I find the much-publicised Tinker Bell a new and exciting character; the transforma-

"Madeline."

tion of Barrie's disembodied spot of light into this Gorgeous Gussie of the Never-Never Land represents Disney's usual injection of sex. (My own feeling is that Barrie could stand a little sex, even in the shape of this pocket-sized pin-up.)

Peter Pan provides Disney with a subject that differs from his previous work in one fundamental: all the principal characters are human. For once, animals take second place; in fact the only animal characters in the film are Nana the dog (a characterisation I found physically nauseating) and the crocodile (remembered from *Fantasia*). Unfortunately this return to the world of human reality is a failure; for Disney has never been happy when drawing human beings. At their worst—the Lost Boys—the characters look like animals; at best—Captain Hook and Tinker Bell—like personages from an animated "funny." Strangely enough it is here, in illustrating human beings, that U.P.A. (United Producers of America) are most successful.

The earliest work of this group to be acclaimed in England was a non-Magoo cartoon, *Gerald McBoing Boing*, a charming and ingenious fantasy about a child whose special predicament, like Magoo's, is a physical infirmity that turns to spectacular advantage. It introduced two names of importance—the executive producer Stephen Bosustow, who founded the company, and the designer John Hubley, associated with most of its best work until he left it a few months ago (under, it appears, an un-American cloud). A few months later, *Rooty Toot Toot* and the engaging *Madeline* were seen at the Edinburgh Festival. The first, an amusing variation upon the Frankie and Johnnie theme, suffered from being sadly over-rated because of its newness; the second, different in style and feeling from the others, exploited a self-conscious charm and the *fausse naïveté* of Bemelmans' post-war New Yorker cartoons. All three films had wit and gaiety and cleverness, as well as revealing an occasional fondness for the chic for its own sake. But they were, after all, in the nature of experiments. It was left to the Mr. Magoo film to attempt the major task—the creation of a series of character cartoons with a consistent hero.

Whether Mr. Magoo will eventually supplant Donald Duck or Goofy in the imaginations of the general cinema-going public is open to doubt. Probably he will not. He and his creators stem from a different tradition from Disney and will presumably appeal to a different type of audience. Whereas Disney is the exponent of the comic strip technique and the "funnies" mentality, U.P.A. inherit the



traditions of the sophisticated magazine cartoon with its visual and verbal criticism of manners and morals. They are the masters of the wry grimace: self-mockery *per se*. Like the magazine from which they draw inspiration, their comic attitude is moulded on Santayana's dictum: "Life is not a spectacle but a predicament." To illustrate this, they celebrate the familiar—objects or situations—in its oldest guise. For them visual eccentricity reflects the oddness of life. They appeal to that something inside us whose reaction to politics, for instance, manifests itself in a desire to paint moustachios on public statues. That they sometimes repeat themselves is inevitable—*Gerald McBoing Boing's Symphony*, for instance, proved that the joke about the sound effects boy was good for one film only—but it is not the inhuman kind of factory repetition of the Disney group. What U.P.A. lack as a whole, in fact, is the facility of mechanical invention; when they are closest to Disney, as in the unfortunate *Pete Hothead*, which depends almost entirely on gag-situations, they only show how far away they should really keep from him. It is significant that the "idea" of *Gerald McBoing Boing* came from the curiously named and talented Dr. Seuss, who provided the stories of the two best George Pal puppets, *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Gubbins* and *Mulberry Street*.

However, it is not an interest in the technique or artistic forebears of the U.P.A. group that brings audiences to the Cameo News Theatre: it is Mr. Magoo himself—a cartoon hero who is not an anthropomorphised dog or duck or mouse. Mr. Magoo is a near-sighted gentleman in the late middle age, short, bald and benevolent, though of a somewhat uncertain temper. Because of his infirmity the world around him remains a blur. Things are never as they seem: his idea of what is happening is always at variance with the reality. The comedy and situations arise from his refusal to recognise the fact.

His courage in the face of wildly improbable obstacles and his conviction that all is well make him a sort of modern Pangloss, a clown at odds with reality. This alone places him in a different category from the famous Disney heroes, who are the objects of gags rather than, like Mr. Magoo, the subject. Like Buster Keaton, he inhabits a world that has been bewitched while his back was turned; unlike Keaton, he is never really aware of the sorcery. He is the victim of a personal fantasy: he believes in the absolute normality of the world. When returning to continue his conversation with Bottomley, in *Fuddy Duddy Buddy*, for example, he does not realise

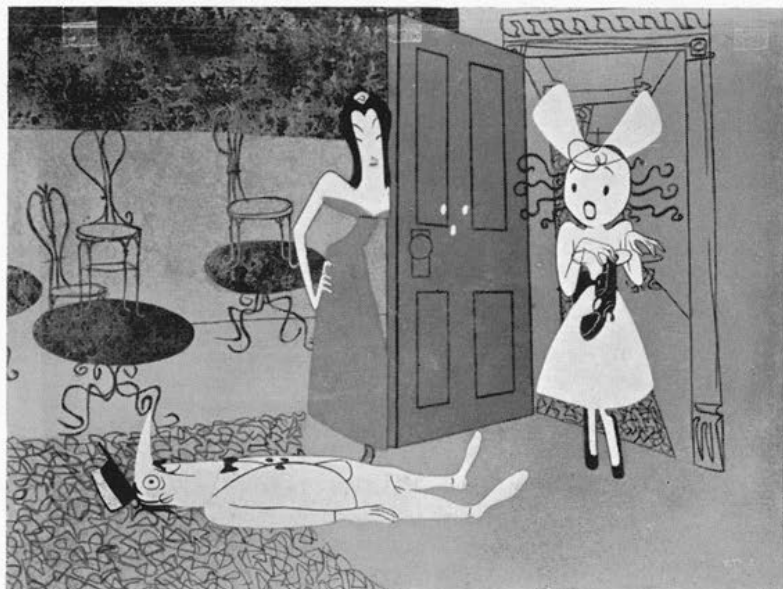


that he is now speaking to a walrus; or when playing golf, in *Grizzly Golfer*, that a bear has taken Waldo's place as his caddy. Mr. Magoo blunders gaily on, missing death and mutilation by a hair's-breadth, yet saved at every turn by his superb insouciance, the innocence of one who is convinced he is doing the right thing. His very infirmity helps to protect him in a world gone mad; being near-sighted he does not recognise the anarchy that surrounds him: he can preserve his innocence.

Most of the U.P.A. films reveal a pre-occupation with visual reality unusual in any cartoon. Even though Gerald McBoing, physically handicapped like Mr. Magoo, overcomes his infirmity, he exists in a never-never land of flat-coloured backgrounds and outline people; the interest lies in the people and the human situation involved. Mr. Magoo, of course, lives in a world of Dog Snatchers, Burglars, Babies, Golf, etc.: the real world. And there, fundamentally, lies the difference between Disney and U.P.A. The latter reject the traditional never-never land of the film cartoon in favour of human reality, even though their style is less realistic on the surface: they show us animals that are animals and not talking houghnans. Indeed it is when they come to depict animals that the U.P.A. illustrators fail. The Dog (*Spellbound Hound*), the Walrus (*Fuddy Duddy Buddy*), the Grizzly (*Grizzly Golfer*), are all Disney-esque characterisations and seem curiously unconvincing. Cuddles, Mr. Magoo's dog, and the Panther, both in *The Dog Snatcher*, represent U.P.A.'s first successes at animal character drawing.

What are the reasons for the popularity of Mr. Magoo? Why has a Magoo cult arisen? The answer, I think, lies in the fact that Mr. Magoo personifies a contemporary situation; the Disney heroes no longer do. They were essentially the creations of the 'thirties, the period of Astaire musicals and confident, madcap comedies. Donald Duck, for instance, did the sort of things we did not dare do ourselves: he was the arch-anarchist, the rebel we would have liked to have been. Since then, however, we have experienced a hot war and are in the throes of a cold one. We have had every opportunity, therefore, of studying the nature and results of irresponsible action. And we no longer admire it. Mr. Magoo represents for us the man who would be responsible and serious in a world that seems insane; he is a creation of the 'fifties, the age of anxiety; his situation reflects our own.

"Rooty Toot Toot."





Madame de . . .

Max Ophüls' new film is based on the charming story by Louise de Vilmorin, which is concerned with Madame de . . ., her husband, the Ambassador, and her ear-rings. These valuable ear-rings constantly change hands, and each time they do so, they reflect a new stage in an amorous intrigue which soon becomes more complicated than the mere triangle which first encloses it.

Danielle Darrieux plays Madame de . . ., Charles Boyer is Monsieur de . . ., and for the part of the Ambassador, Ophüls engaged Vittorio de Sica. Not the least fascinating aspect of the film is the spectacle it offers of one distinguished director being directed by another.





CORONATIANA U.S.A.

James Morgan

Left: Jean Simmons as Young Bess.
Right: a portrait of Queen Elizabeth
in the National Portrait Gallery.



Two American film companies royally launched new films, *Young Bess* (on a giant panoramic screen) and *The Sword and the Rose* (British-made, but a Disney "live action" production) as additional Coronation festivities, and a third produced a useful reissue from the vaults, *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*. All are dedicated to the glory that was Tudor England, and all have some interesting, not to say unexpected, points to make about it. The choice of period does not surprise; while other epochs are discarded and revived like other fashions, Elizabethan England and its environs have always stayed in favour as the golden age of gallantry, romance and patriotism. Today, of course, its associations have been constantly exploited since the accession of the present Queen, although one might have thought the differences between a personal and a constitutional monarchy, and the total lack of resemblances in appearance and character between the two Elizabeths would make such parallels worthless.

The principles of serial magazine-fiction, however, are strong enough to overwhelm the weight of history, and M.G.M., Disney-R.K.O. and Warner Bros. show themselves firmly united on this point. History is much too complicated, and their own view of the Tudors is both more straightforward and more jolly. While the Victorian age has had its ups and downs, and is now quaint and leisurely after years of being gaslit, furtive and melodramatic, those colourful Tudors have always implied the amours of Bluff King Hal and the splendours of the Virgin Queen. Twenty years ago, this view was emanating from Denham, and Korda's *Private Life of Henry VIII* was made at a time when the optimism and the splendours of his era did not offer such a sharp contrast to our own; it seems inevitable if not fitting, however, that we should now rely on America even for cinematic reminders of a glorious past.

Not that Korda's film was historical in any serious sense at all; it merely restated, in great high spirits, some erroneous popular myths—that Henry's successive marriages were all sexually motivated, for instance, and that Anne Boleyn was an innocent victimised charmer. Like two other British films of the 'thirties, it was more concerned to present a historical figure as a sympathetic or

picturesque hero or heroine; and so *Tudor Rose* pitted Nova Pilbeam's Lady Jane Grey against an implacably bloody Bloody Mary, while *Fire Over England* gave us Flora Robson's Queen Elizabeth, a homely, bossy matron flinging patriotic slogans across the Thames at Greenwich.

The American films have now filled in some useful gaps. *Young Bess* offers another Elizabeth, at an earlier stage, with Laughton reappearing as Henry VIII; the merry monarch also occurs in *The Sword and the Rose* under the features of James Robertson Justice. Connoisseurs have also had the chance of seeing Mary Morris's young Elizabeth on the stage, but this apart, we are now in a rich if confusing world where Jean Simmons grows up into Bette Davis (or Flora Robson?) and where the apparently ageless Henry VIII has been bluffing his way around for years with a different Catherine Parr. It would be hopeless to attempt any comparative estimates of these characterisations, and quite right to trust one's immediate instinct that none can be reconciled with the other. The mind simply boggles at Flora Robson's Queen having a crush on Errol Flynn's Essex, or Mary Morris's young Bess falling for Stewart Granger's Thomas Seymour; at this point surrealism intervenes, and it had better not be encouraged.

It is too much, no doubt, to hope even for glimpses of a world picture of the Tudor period in these films: of the rise of England in a Europe discarding the feudalities of Christendom and defining itself as a continent of separate powers, with the politics that go with powers; of an England in which a whole new society of middle-class diplomatists and politicians were replacing the dictatorial barons; of the immense social revolution caused by the Reformation, and the endless intrigues revolving around the succession during Elizabeth's reign. Without any evocation of the diversity of social and political realities, and their attendant motives, the lives of royal personages and their entourages in these films narrow down to two things: for the monarchs, conflict between private desire (sex) and public duty, and for the court figures, a great deal of double-dealing ascribed to thwarted love (of the royal personages) or mercenary greed.

A comparison of fiction and historical fact in these three Coronation offerings emphasises their unanimity.

Young Bess

Young Bess is a girl of (from her appearance) about 18, with Tudor red hair and a Tudor temperament which she demonstrates mainly by "answering back"—it is the only possible expression—when spoken to by her bluff but faintly sinister father.

From their first meeting, the Princess falls in love with the handsome Lord Admiral, Thomas Seymour. When Henry is dying—Elizabeth is still defying her father, prompting him to wish he could be "there to see the fun"—the king calls the Admiral to his side and mutters suspicions of his brother, Edward Seymour.

The wicked brother Edward, however, contrives to become Protector and usurp the guardianship of the boy king Edward VI. Elizabeth, living with Catherine Parr, the king's widow, and preparing herself to be an admiral's wife by reading up naval history, is greatly shocked by the discovery that her adored Seymour really loves Catherine. Generously, however, she intrigues with her little brother and arranges their marriage.

For some time things go well, with Catherine sewing at home and Elizabeth going off for a day's sailing in the flagship with the Admiral; but then the situation becomes too much for the Princess, she has a heart-to-heart talk with Catherine and retires to Hatfield.

Soon after this, Catherine, understanding to the last, dies in her husband's arms and Elizabeth's hopes of eventual marriage to Seymour increase. But the unscrupulous Protector, meanwhile, has been busily plotting his popular brother's downfall. Seymour pays a midnight farewell visit to Elizabeth before being arrested on trumped-up charges of treason.

Elizabeth, questioned by the Council as to her relations with Thomas Seymour, defies them and hurries to London to see her brother Edward; but she arrives too late; the Lord Admiral is executed and the Princess retires, heartbroken, to Hatfield. The memory of this tragic love, so cruelly disrupted, will remain with her for a lifetime.

Elizabeth was 13 at the time of her father's death: 15 at the time of the Seymour incident.

Thomas Seymour—at this time nearly 40—was only appointed Lord Admiral after his brother became Protector; the shrewd Henry distrusted him as an ambitious adventurer.

Seymour married Catherine secretly a few months after Henry's death, and then used his influence with his brother and with the little king (who in the film looks about ten years younger than his sister—the actual age difference was four years) to persuade them to agree to the marriage. For reasons of personal ambition, he would have preferred to marry Elizabeth, but the Council frustrated this plan.

After a certain amount of gossip and scandal about Seymour and Elizabeth—he used to go into her room in the morning and "he would put open the curtains and bid her good morrow and make as though he would come at her; and she would go further in the bed so that he could not come at her"—Catherine Parr decided to send the Princess away. Elizabeth wrote to Catherine: "Truly I was replete with sorrow to depart from your Highness. And albeit I answered little I weighed it more deeper when you said you would warn me of all evils that you should hear of me. . . . But what may I more say than thank God for providing such friends to me?"

Seymour tried to use his friendship with Edward to plot against his brother and the Council; he was planning to build up a party of nobles loyal to himself—mainly in the West Country; he was anxious, as a matter of policy, to marry Edward's sister and to add her lands to his own. The Protector had good reason for suspecting that he was aiming at a coup d'état.

After Seymour's arrest, Kate Ashley (Elizabeth's governess) and Parry (her cofferer) were questioned. Both eventually broke down and told the story of Elizabeth's relations with Seymour as history knows it. Parry admitted to conversations about finance with Seymour. Elizabeth herself was tougher, and her main concern seems to have been to avoid trouble for herself. Tyrwhitt, sent to question her, complained that "she hath a very good wit and nothing is gotten of her but by great policy." In fact, nothing could be proved against her and she managed to close a rather alarming episode.

Three Henry VIII's. Left: Charles Laughton in "Young Bess." Centre: portrait (after Holbein) in the National Portrait Gallery. Right: James Robertson Justice in "The Sword and the Rose."



The Sword and the Rose

Young Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's sister, is a gay, pleasure-loving Princess, giving balls at which she tries out new dance steps from France and affronts the haughty Katharine of Aragon. Henry, to secure an alliance with France, decides to marry her off to the aged Louis XII, with a dowry of 400,000 crowns. But Mary has fallen in love with dashing Charles Brandon, commoner and man-at-arms, who first attracted Henry's approval by winning a wrestling match against the Duke of Buckingham. Disguised as a pageboy, she attempts to embark with Brandon on a boat sailing to the New World, but is caught, and agrees to marry the French king to save her lover's head.

Imprisoned in the Tower while Mary goes to France to marry Louis XII, Brandon is betrayed by Buckingham, in love with Mary Tudor. Buckingham withholds the motives of Mary's marriage from him, then pretends to aid him escape, while secretly hiring assassins to pursue and kill him. They fail, but do not live to report the fact.

Mary keeps the old but spry Louis at bay by encouraging him to drink too much and thus suffer heart attacks. He soon dies. The new king, Francis, proposes to Mary, but her heart is still set on Brandon. She is escorted back to England by Buckingham, who tells her Brandon is dead and makes lustful advances in a Normandy inn. Mary is rescued by Brandon, and they return to court at Whitehall, having married on the way. The French ambassadors are there, repeating Francis's marriage proposition and offering Henry VIII the 400,000 crowns of dowry in repayment. Henry manages to appropriate the dowry, and in the good humour of the moment, gives the young couple twenty manors and the rents therefrom as a wedding present, creating Brandon Duke of Suffolk. ("We need something to live on," Mary has explained.)

Mary Tudor, sickly from childhood (she died at 34), was infatuated with Charles Brandon, already Duke of Suffolk, a close personal friend of Henry VIII's and a notorious libertine and intriguer. At this time, Brandon had already extorted a marriage contract from his rich 15-year-old ward (which she repudiated on coming of age); disowned a previous contract with a commoner, Ann Brown; married a rich widow; and was courting Margaret of Savoy, daughter of the Emperor Maximilian. Mary Tudor agreed to marry Louis XII on condition that, if she outlived him, her second marriage could be of her own choice—i.e. Brandon. The elopement story, the objections to Brandon as a commoner, his danger of execution, are all of course untrue.

Nonsense. Brandon was perfectly aware of Mary's motives, and attended her coronation as French queen in Paris.

Brandon was despatched by Henry to Paris to command the negotiations with Francis on Louis XII's death. While there, he secretly married Mary in Paris, though Mary had been warned against him by many at Henry's court; he was now considered to "traffick with devils." They returned to face Henry's ire, only appeased by Wolsey's intercession, and Brandon's promise to pay the king £24,000 and induce Francis to return the dowry. Francis, however, would only return half, and kept most of Louis XII's presents to Mary; Henry was further discomposed at losing out on the deal. Brandon and Mary retired under a cloud. Later they were restored to favour; on Mary's death, fifteen years later, Brandon had married an heiress within two months.

Elizabeth and Essex

Essex returns victorious and a popular idol from the battle of Cadiz, and though he and Elizabeth—tempestuous lovers—had quarrelled, she is eagerly awaiting him and welcomes him affectionately back. Alone, they rediscover the ecstasy of each other's arms. . . .

Elizabeth and Essex soon quarrel again, mainly over "Lady Penelope Gray," a court beauty to whom Elizabeth considers Essex is paying too much attention. He goes off to subdue Tyrone in Ireland. His enemies (Raleigh and Cecil) contrive to intercept his letters to Elizabeth, and she, imagining herself neglected, furiously recalls him.

Furious at being recalled from a successful campaign, Essex boldly returns with his army and surrounds Elizabeth's palace. An audience with Elizabeth follows, they are reconciled—in his arms she becomes a woman again—and then she reveals she was only pretending all the time, has him clapped in the Tower and tried for treason. She is extremely unpopular with Londoners for this. At the last moment, she relents and offers to marry him. Essex, partly through pride, partly because he is a loyal subject—to die a popular hero would be to weaken the Queen's cause—confesses to treasons he had not committed and goes to the block.

Elizabeth's welcome was far from warm, for she had invested £50,000 in the Spanish expedition—and, admirable business woman that she was, showed great displeasure at getting nothing back. She was also jealous of Essex's popularity.

Before departing for Ireland (three years later), Essex had mismanaged a new Spanish expedition. He had been married for some time to Sir Philip Sidney's widow (who does not appear in the film), and enjoying affairs with at least four court beauties, one of whom bore him a bastard but none of whom was called Lady Penelope Gray. The story of letters intercepted is a fabrication: Essex returned to London, having failed to subdue Tyrone, to throw himself at the Queen's feet and demand pardon.

Out of favour after his failure in Ireland, Essex tried to reinstate himself by a mixture of charm and intrigue. Both failed. He rashly staged a march of his followers through London, hoping to excite popular sympathy and depose his arch-enemy, Cecil, but for whom, he imagined, the Queen would be at his feet. The Queen pretended to forgive the demonstration, then had him arrested, tried for treason, found guilty, and sentenced to execution. She changed her mind once about the execution, countermanded it, but the next day reconfirmed it.

The deviations—if they are original enough to be called that—are in each film fascinatingly similar; in each case, the motivations are the same, the need for a popular hero or heroine, and the preference for personal rather than political motives. Thus Thomas Seymour, Essex and Charles Brandon become romantic, true and noble lovers, when they were in fact fairly unscrupulous intriguers, reckless and ambitious, and bound to end on the

block. Physical glamorisation goes hand in hand with this, as in *Young Bess*, to accommodate the love-team of Jean Simmons and Stewart Granger, Bess is made to look older and Seymour younger than they really were; Elizabeth was more than thirty years older than Essex, and here again the age-gap is about halved; the notorious Brandon, a tendency to corpulence betraying his debaucheries, and the sickly Mary Tudor, more than ten



years his junior, are turned into Richard Todd and Glynis Johns. Seymour, Essex and Brandon all sacrifice themselves to their royal loves; the lure of rich acres and powerful position is never acknowledged, and political realities are only admitted when they interfere with private sex; the necessity of a "beautiful" love story, in fact, overwhelms all.

Nor are the minor characters any truer to the period. Apart from the fact that each film apparently labours under the delusion that marriage was to the Elizabethans what it was to the Victorians—when, in fact, it was more often than not politically motivated and half the Tudor court was feverishly buying "annulments" of various kinds to accommodate new schemes—most of the supporting relationships are based on conventional triangular motifs, such as Seymour-Young Bess-Catherine Parr and Brandon-Mary Tudor-Buckingham. Henry VIII appears as a genial buffoon, and though Laughton at least gives him an edge of something more, a glance at an authentic portrait shows the reaches of brutality and cunning utterly unplumbed. The plump Wolsey (played in *The Sword and the Rose* by the slim, angular D. A. Clarke-Smith) starts as a schemer and ends as a daddy—probably all that could be managed, since in fact Brandon was to betray shamefully his protector a few years later. Conversely, *Young Bess* makes Edward Seymour a double-dyed villain entirely without historical foundation.

As entertainments, the films offer three familiar stereotypes—*Young Bess* the slow, plushy, high-class number with "dignified" literary dialogue; *The Sword and the Rose* a shameless romp, toned up with some delicious archaisms ("Dame Fortune is an unpredictable jade," "Wait a moment until I get the Princess aboard the lugger," etc.); *Elizabeth and Essex* based on the remnants of Maxwell Anderson's superior matinée play and rebuilt as a vehicle for the illustrious Bette Davis who, in her far more interesting way, is still no more and no less a Tudor Queen than Jean Simmons. To all this, however, a not unrewarding antidote has simultaneously been available at the Old Vic, where, beneath the pantomimic exuberance of Tyrone Guthrie's production, something more relevant is disinterred from the Shakespeare-Fletcher *Henry VIII*; a chronicle of a series of spectacular rises to, and falls from, power. This at least gives us a glimpse of a world in which M.G.M.'s, Disney's and Warners' Tudor Coronatiana could never have existed; and if the Britten-William Plomer opera *Gloriana* seems to court unpopularity by its neglect of the heroic aspects of the age and its Queen, its malicious dramatic stroke, on the personal level, whereby Essex surprises his vain but wigless sovereign *en déshabille*, has the kind of aptness which—though it shocked Mr. Beverly Baxter—would knock these brittle cinematic fictions down with one sharp feather-blow.

Story of 3 Tudor Loves. Top: "Sword and the Rose." Mary Tudor (Glynis Johns) at her interrupted elopement, her pageboy disguise unmasked while Brandon (Richard Todd) looks helplessly on. Centre: Young Bess and her Admiral (Jean Simmons, Stewart Granger). Below: Elizabeth and Essex (Bette Davis, Errol Flynn) in a moment of private life.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Aldous Huxley

In 1929 Mr. Aldous Huxley saw "The Jazz Singer" in Paris and was introduced to the talkies. How deeply the experience revolted him the following essay leaves in no doubt; one has the impression he will never go to the cinema again. A few years later, however, Mr. Huxley settled in California, almost on the doorstep of the wicked city, and since that time he has come to terms with the talkies to the extent of working on scripts for them, on "Madame Curie" with Greer Garson, on "Pride and Prejudice" with Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier, on "Jane Eyre" with Joan Fontaine and Orson Welles, and the adaptation of his own story "The Gioconda Smile," retitled "A Woman's Vengeance," with Charles Boyer.

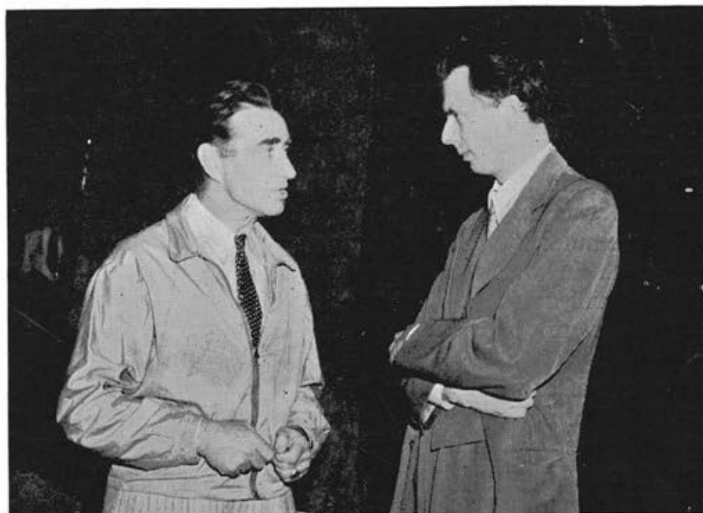
This essay (which has been slightly abridged here) first appeared in "Do What You Will" in 1929, and is reprinted by permission of the publishers, Chatto and Windus.

I have just been, for the first time, to see and hear a picture talk. "A little late in the day," my up-to-date readers will remark, with a patronising and contemptuous smile. "This is 1929; there isn't much news in talkies now. But better late than never."

Better late than never? Ah, no! There, my friends, you're wrong. This is one of those cases where it is most decidedly better never than late, better never than early, better never than on the stroke of time. One of the numerous cases, I may add; and the older I grow, the more numerous I find them. There was a time when I should have felt terribly ashamed of not being up-to-date. I lived in a chronic apprehension lest I might, so to speak, miss the last bus, and so find myself stranded and benighted in a desert of demodeness, while others, more nimble than myself, had already climbed on board, taken their tickets and set out towards those bright but, alas, ever receding goals of Modernity and Sophistication. Now, however, I have grown shameless, I have lost my fears. I can watch unmoved the departure of the last social-cultural bus—the innumerable last buses, which are starting at every instant in all the world's capitals. I make no effort to board them, and when the noise of each departure has died down, "Thank Goodness!" is what I say to myself in the solitude. I find nowadays that I simply don't want to be up-to-date.

Such, then, are the reasons for my very tardy introduction to the talkies. The explanation of my firm resolve never, if I can help it, to be re-introduced will be found in the following simple narrative of what I saw and heard in that fetid hall on the Boulevard des Italiens, where the latest and most frightful creation-saving device for the production of standardised amusement had been installed.

We entered the hall half-way through the performance of a series of music-hall turns—not substantial ones, of course, but the two-dimensional images of turns with artificial voices. There were no travel films, nothing in the Natural History line, none of those fascinating Events of the Week—Lady Mayoresses launching battleships, Japanese earthquakes, hundred-to-one outsiders winning races, revolutionaries on the march in Nicaragua—which are always the greatest and often the sole attractions in the programmes of our cinemas. Nothing but disembodied entertainers, gesticulating flatly on the screen and making gramophone-like noises as they did so. Some sort of comedian was performing as we entered. But he soon vanished to give place to somebody's celebrated jazz-band—not merely audible in all its loud vulgarity of brassy guffaw and caterwauling sentiment, but also visible in a series of apocalyptic close-ups of the individual performers. A beneficent providence has dimmed my powers of sight,



1938. Aldous Huxley (right) visits Frank Lloyd on the set in Hollywood during filming of "If I were King".

so that at a distance of more than four or five yards I am blissfully unaware of the full horrors of the average human countenance. At the cinema, however, there is no escape. Magnified up to Brobdingnagian proportions, the human countenance smiles its six-foot smiles, opens and shuts its thirty-two-inch eyes, registers soulfulness or grief, libido or whimsicality, with every square centimetre of its several roods of pallid mooniness. Nothing short of total blindness can preserve one from the spectacle. The jazz-players were forced upon me; I regarded them with a fascinated horror. It was the first time, I suddenly realised, that I had ever clearly seen a jazz-band. The spectacle was positively terrifying.

The performers belonged to two contrasted races. There were the dark and polished young Hebrews, whose souls were in those mournfully sagging, sea-sickishly undulating melodies of mother-love and nostalgia and yammering amorousness and clotted sensuality which have been the characteristically Jewish contributions to modern popular music. And there were the chubby young Nordics, with Aryan faces transformed by the strange plastic forces of the North American environment into the likeness of very large uncooked muffins or the unveiled posteriors of babes. (The more sympathetic Red Indian type of Nordic American face was completely absent from this particular assemblage of jazz-players.) Gigantically enlarged, these personages appeared one after another on the screen, each singing or playing his instrument, and at the same time registering the emotions appropriate to the musical circumstances.

The spectacle, I repeat, was really terrifying. For the first time I felt grateful for the defect of vision which had preserved me from an earlier acquaintance with such aspects of modern life. And at the same time I wished that I could become, for the occasion, a little hard of hearing. For if good music has charms to soothe the savage breast, bad music has no less powerful spells for filling the mildest breast with rage, the happiest with horror and disgust. Oh, those mammy-songs, those love-longings, those loud hilarities! How was it possible that human emotions intrinsically decent could be so ignobly parodied? I felt like a man who, having asked for wine, is offered a brimming bowl of hog-wash. And not even fresh hog-wash. Rancid hog-wash, decaying hog-wash. For there was a horrible tang of putrefaction in all that music. Those yearnings for Mammy of Mine and My Baby, for Dixie and the Land where Skies are Blue and Dreams come True, for Granny and Tennessee and You—they were all a necrophily. The Mammy after whom the black young Hebrews and the blonde young muffin-faces so retchingly yearned was an ancient Gorgonzola cheese; the Baby of their tremulously gargled desire was a leg of mutton after a month in warm storage; Granny had been dead for weeks; and as for Dixie and Tennessee and Dream Land—they were odoriferous with the least artificial of manures.

When, after what seemed hours, the jazz-band concluded its dreadful performance, I sighed in thankfulness. But the thankfulness was premature. For the film which followed was hardly less distressing. It was the story of the child of a Cantor in a synagogue, afflicted, to his father's justifiable fury, with an itch for jazz. This itch, assisted by the Cantor's boot, sends him out into the world, where, in due course, and thanks to My Baby, his dreams come true, and he is employed as a jazz-singer on the music-hall stage. Promoted from the provinces to Broadway, the jazz-singer takes the opportunity to revisit the home of his childhood. But the Cantor will have nothing to do with him, absolutely nothing, in spite of his success, in spite, too, of his moving eloquence. "You yourself always taught me," says the son pathetically, "that the voice of music was the voice of God." *Vox jazzi vox Dei*—the truth is new and beautiful. But stern old Poppa's heart refuses to be melted. Even Mammy of Mine is unable to patch up a reconciliation. The singer is reduced to going out once more into the night—and from the night back to his music-hall, where, amid a forest of waving legs, he resumes his interrupted devotions to that remarkable God whose voice is the music of Mr. Irving Berlin as interpreted by Mr. Paul Whiteman's orchestra.

The crisis of the drama arrives when, the Cantor being mortally sick and unable to fulfil his functions at the synagogue, Mammy of Mine and the Friends of his Childhood implore the young man to come and sing the Atonement Service in his father's place. Unhappily, this religious function is booked to take place at the same hour as that other act of worship vulgarly known as the First Night. There ensues a terrific struggle, worthy of the pen of a Racine or a Dryden, between love and honour. Love for Mammy of Mine draws the jazz-singer towards the synagogue; but love for My Baby draws the Cantor's son towards the theatre, where she, as principal Star, is serving the deity no less acceptably with her legs and smile than he with his voice. Honour also calls from either side; for

Honour demands that he should serve the God of his fathers at the synagogue, but it also demands that he should serve the jazz-voiced God of his adoption at the theatre. Some very eloquent captions appear at this point. With the air of a seventeenth-century hero, the jazz-singer protests that he must put his Career before even his love. The nature of the dilemma has changed, it will be seen, since Dryden's day. In the old dramas, it was love that had to be sacrificed to painful duty. In the modern instance the sacrifice is at the shrine of what William James called "the Bitch Goddess, Success." Love is to be abandoned for the stern pursuit of newspaper notoriety and dollars.

In the end the singer makes the best of both worlds—satisfies Mammy of Mine and even Poor Poppa by singing at the synagogue, and, on the following evening, scores a terrific success at the postponed first night of My Baby's revue. The film concludes with a scene in the theatre, with Mammy of Mine in the stalls (Poor Poppa is by this time safely underground), and the son, with My Baby in the background, warbling down at her the most nauseatingly luscious, the most penetratingly vulgar mammy-song that it has ever been my lot to hear.

To what length this process of decay has gone was very strikingly demonstrated by the next item on the programme, which was the first of that series of music-hall turns of which the dreadful jazz-band had been the last. For no sooner had the singer and My Baby and Mammy of Mine disappeared into the limbo of inter-cinematographic darkness, than a very large and classically-profiled personage, dressed in the uniform of a clown, appeared on the screen, opened his mouth very wide indeed, and poured out, in a terrific Italian tenor voice, the famous soliloquy of Pagliacci from Leoncavallo's opera. Rum, Tum, Ti-Tum, Tum; Rum-ti-ti, Tum, Ti-Tum, Tum—it is the bawling-ground of every Southern virtuoso, and a piece which, at ordinary times, I would go out of my way to avoid hearing. But in comparison with the jazz-band's Hebrew melodies and the singer's jovialities and mammy yearnings, Leoncavallo's throaty vulgarity seemed not only refined and sincere, but even beautiful, positively noble. Yes, noble; for, after all, the composer, whatever his native second-rateness, had stood in some sort of organic relationship, through a tradition of taste and of feeling, with the men who built Santa Maria del Fiore and the Malatestan temple, who painted the frescoes at Arezzo and Padua, who composed the Mass of Pope Marcellus and wrote the Divine Comedy and the Orlando Furioso. Whereas the Hebrew melodists and the muffin-faced young Nordics, with their Swanee whistles and their saxophones, the mammy-songsters, the vocal yearners for Dixie and My Baby, are in no kind of relationship with any of the immemorial decencies of human life, but only with their own inward decay. It is a corruption as novel as the regime under which they and all the rest of us now live—as novel as protestantism and capitalism; as novel as urbanisation and democracy and the apotheosis of the Average Man; as novel as Benjamin-Franklinism and the no less repulsive philosophy and ethic of the young Good Timer; as novel as creation-saving machinery, and the thought-saving, time-killing press; as novel as Taylorised work and mechanised amusement. Ours is a spiritual climate in which the immemorial decencies find it hard to flourish. Another generation or so should see them definitely dead. Is there a resurrection?

Book Reviews

SCANDINAVIAN FILM, by Forsyth Hardy. National Cinema Series: General Editor, Roger Manvell. Illustrated. (The Falcon Press, 15/-).

Reviewed by Ebbe Neergaard

It's nice to listen to a man's voice when he is in love. That must be the reason why Forsyth Hardy's *Scandinavian Film* makes such pleasant reading. There is warmth and inspiration in it. Especially, he has fallen hard for the Swedish film, and his analysis of its two great periods is excellent. The description of the Sjöström-Stiller reign, 1917-1922, is less original, rather a recapitulation of the two great men's importance in the development of cinema, but full of useful facts and well balanced. His survey of the second revival of Swedish film, from 1940 onwards, supplies the initiated reader with some pangs of truth. Most aptly, he points out that the key film of the revival is *Hets* (Frenzy), because it is "adult." There is the word. It takes one to Gilbert Seldes' criticism of average American production: it's not adult, it's made for teenagers. Modern Swedish films combine the bitterness of youth moving into the world of grown-ups (Ingmar Bergman), with a heightened feeling for an expressive, unconventional use of the medium (Sjöberg, Bergman, Hasse Ekman in his last films, and others).

Forsyth Hardy in his book gives many good examples of this new type of film, and his comments are both shrewd and enthusiastic. But he doesn't generalise, which I would have liked him to do; at least some kind of summing-up now and then would have relieved the somewhat heavy impression of hundreds and hundreds of details—correct details! But what I may criticise here is, from another point of view, Forsyth Hardy's virtue and strength. He is as reliable as an old Scottish rock. One is amazed at the lack of mis-spellings and printers' errors in the hundreds of difficult Nordic names in this book, at the correctness of dates, the balanced distribution of space for important and less important artists and films. This is certainly a handbook, and a handbook with an index—which is worth noting, as the lack of indexes greatly hampers the usefulness of some of the other volumes in this series.

Of the 50 or so large pages of text, about 30 are devoted to Swedish cinema, 15 to Danish, 4 to Norwegian. Even as a Dane I have nothing to say against this distribution of interest among the three national candidates. Danes will feel proud and grateful for the space given to our documentary

film production, and on the whole Danish feature films are correctly described and placed. There are one or two slightly peculiar aberrations—the mention of a quite unimportant film, *It Started on Board*, as an example of Danish production in the early 30's, and the omission of such films as *The Vicar of Vejby*, *Church and Organ*, and especially Schneckvoigt's *Hotel Paradise*; even if they may have been literary, they had admirable continuity and very good acting. Among the '40's films, Forsyth Hardy might well have examined in some detail Ole Palsbo's *Take What You Want*, one of the few decidedly "adult" Danish films. Above all, I miss a more detailed analysis of Ole Olsen's work in Nordisk Films Ko., from 1911-1916. No explanation is offered as to why these hundreds of feature films were such great international successes; they are not even characterised. A certain perspective could have been gained from the story of Olsen's very clear and very, very simple production code, and the films resulting from it; high society melodramas with their counts and battalions of corseted ladies, crime dramas with their "sophisticated" upper-class criminals, their "shocks" and "tricks" and "clous," the amusing "interesting" characterisations of spiritualists and religious fanatics. . . . And why only mention that poor Valdemar Psilander, the popular star, committed suicide—which he apparently did not, the incorrect detail, as the doctor's certificate said thrombosis—instead of trying to describe his special, gentle masculine charm and the kind of films in which he appeared? And why only a few, rather cool words about Danish cameramen of that period who were, I think, unique?

This brings me to the illustrations, 32 pages of excellent reproductions (alas, mainly production stills). The balance of this section cannot be so highly praised. We will pass over the fact that there are 61 stills from Swedish sound features, and only 8 from Danish sound features, and 9 from silents. But I cannot see the reason, for example, for printing three stills from a Swedish film called *Singoalla*, not even mentioned in the text—and quite rightly, for it was an awful "international" bag of emptiness—and only one from *Himlaspelet*, which he (and I) think one of the most important films, and only two from *Hets*. I am afraid there is no relation between the sound judgment of the text and the choice of illustrations. (Another example: a still of Olaf Fonss, a silent actor seen in a totally unknown film, but no still of Psilander.) And there are no illustrations of the astonishing accomplishments of Danish cameramen round about 1914, whose influence on the '20's was important. It goes without saying that the illustration of film books should not be too lightly undertaken.

The Seventh Art

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DANTE **ADMIRAL**
1212 So. Broad St. 2806 No. 5th St.

A man has had to stop going to the cinema because the slight flickering of the film gives him an irresistible impulse to strangle the person in front of him. Several times while sitting in cinemas he has suddenly found himself with his hands round his neighbour's throat.—(*Daily Express*)

★

Q. What was the background music used in *The Outlaw*, starring Jane Russell?

A. Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 in B minor, the Pathétique.—("Reader Service" in *Picturegoer*)

★

CONTINENTALE, W.I. *Snake of Death*. x. Einstein's *Alexander Nevsky*. u.—(Advertisement in *Evening Standard*.)

★

Quote of the Week: "Whacko!"—Joyce Grenfell when told that she was to have a part (as a duchess) with Gregory Peck in *The Million Pound Note* at Pinewood.—(*The Star*)

★

Hollywood actress Kathleen Hugh is offering a dinner date in addition to the American offer of 100,000 dollars to the first Communist pilot who surrenders a MiG plane in Korea.—(*Daily Mail*)

There are, of course, some interesting and some beautiful pictures; and the merits of the text have already been praised. Considering its size, this is a remarkable book, and one which fills a gap in English film literature.

L'ECRAN DEMONIAQUE, by Lotte H. Eisner. Illustrated. (André Bonne, Paris, 450 frs.)

Reviewed by Basil Wright

To write well about films you must have two main qualifications. Firstly, you must love cinema. Secondly, you must have seen the films about which you are writing; and if by any chance you refer to a film you have not seen, you must say so. Few writers on cinema fulfil either of these prerequisites. Mlle. Eisner does, and in full measure; she has indeed written the book about German cinema.

Her thesis is cogent and simple. She limits the golden, or classic period of German films to the brevity of 1923-1926. She expatiates on the two main influences on the directors of this period—Expressionism and Max Reinhardt. Beyond these influences she traces the deeper forces in the German character itself; thus she will qualify an analysis of Reinhardt's influence by remarking:

"La véritable Allemagne—n'oublions pas que Reinhardt était israélite—préfère tout naturellement la pénombre à la lumière."

And later she defines the twofold heritage of the German cinema in terms of a Nordic *Weltanschauung* which abandons itself wholeheartedly to an enormous landscape of gloom and mist, while the tradition of artists life Reinhardt conceives of fog and darkness as existing only to be dissipated and conquered. It is not for nothing that the word "*clair-obscur*" appears over and over again in this book.

Mlle. Eisner sticks closely to her thesis. Her chapter on *Caligari* follows a brilliant exposition of Expressionism in general, and is admirably illuminating. It is typical of her intimate knowledge of cinema that she relates *Caligari* to two previous films (one a serial) made in 1914 and 1916. Then comes a series of chapters on the influence of Reinhardt as seen firstly in the work of Wegener, Lubitsch and Lang (the tradition of the *Grosses Schauspielhaus*), and secondly (in the *Kammerspiel* tradition) the important psychological films initiated by Lupu Pick, but wholly dominated by the genius of Carl Mayer, and culminating in Murnau's masterpiece *The Last Laugh*. Her judgements here are admirable. Note her quotation from Goethe at the head of her chapter on Lubitsch; her firm placing of Pick as "*un metteur-en-scène parfaitement sincère sans doute, mais sans grand talent*"; her revaluation of Lang, long overdue and very welcome after so many attempts to depress his reputation; and, above all, her careful, fair, detailed and affectionate appraisal of Murnau as the greatest of them all.

All this is helped by her encyclopædic and intimate knowledge of the films she chooses as examples. She writes as one with that true eye for the motion picture which Eisenstein once told me he believed most people to possess only in embryonic form—that true eye which can comprehend the whole and its component parts simultaneously, which retains images in the special viewing-theatre of the mind's eye for future reference, and which, like a great conductor to whom scores are no longer necessary, can range over the whole procession of films seen, year in, year out, without confusion or the loss of intrinsic values.

It is perhaps this particular quality which makes *L'Ecran Demonique* so valuable. Mlle. Eisner's description of shots, sequences and shape are not those of a professor telling you what to think, or of an archbishop rebuking a heresy; they are designed to illuminate the mind's eye, and they succeed perfectly. It is only when she comes up against the elusive G. W. Pabst that, despite long and penetrating studies, she fails to produce a completely satisfactory synthesis; but it is perhaps unkind to expect even Mlle. Eisner to achieve the impossible. Her final and very interesting conclusion is that *Lulu* is his best film. Rather surprisingly she pays scant attention to *Kameradschaft*; but this may arise from the only real weakness in the book—a tendency to emphasise the steady decline of the German film from 1929 onwards. This, despite remarkably generous references even to films (or rather parts of films) of the Nazi régime, tends to make the last chapter more congested and less enlightening than the rest. By the same token the references to post-war German productions are just, but some-

what perfunctory. In relation, however, to the value (which cannot be overestimated) of the major part of her work, this criticism is a minor one. Two other criticisms, this time minuscule, may perhaps be added. First, should the German cinema really be saddled with Dupont's *Atlantic*, made at Elstree? Second, does not *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* merit at least a short reference in such a comprehensive study?

Let it be said finally that this is an eminently readable book, containing some judgements which one has long wished to find suitably expressed. Jannings, for instance; the author remarks on his "*mimiques pleines de fatuités*." And she describes Bergner as becoming "*nettement insupportable quand elle veut jouer la gaité; elle ignore la badinage*."

As this book does in fact supersede all others on its subject, let us hope for an early English translation, with, incidentally, an index, which is sadly missing in the French edition.

SEPT ANS DE CINEMA FRANCAIS, by Henri Agel, Jean-Pierre Barrot, André Bazin, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Denis Marion, Jean Quéval, Jean-Louis Tallenay. ("7^e Art." Editions du Cerf, Paris. 300 frs.)

RENE CLAIR et les Belles-de-Nuit, by Georges Charensol, with a foreword by René Clair. ("7^e Art." Editions du Cerf, Paris. 300 frs.)

MARCEL CARNE, by Jean Quéval. ("7^e Art." Editions du Cerf, Paris. 300 frs.)

Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

These three books are among the first of a new French series called *7e Art*, of which the editorial board comprises a dozen distinguished French critics. Modestly priced, attractively produced and illustrated, they are probably the best collection of monographs and essays on the cinema to be found anywhere at the moment.

Sept Ans de Cinéma Français, a survey of the postwar French cinema, contains articles by seven different critics, and is an invaluable book for any one interested in the subject, not only for the information and reference it contains, but for the chance it offers to understand French attitudes to their own cinema. One's first reaction is of envy: Bresson, Cocteau, Clair, Becker, Rouquier, Autant-Lara, Ophüls, Carné, Leenhardt, Grémillon—no other country, surely, can claim such a rich concentration of creative talent in its cinema. On the other hand, the writers make it clear that talent by no means ensures opportunity, least of all at a time of economic uncertainty, and Jean Quéval, excellently summarising the economic problems, entitles his article, *Le Cinéma Français est Mortel*.

Perhaps the most interesting critical contributions are those by André Bazin on *Le Théâtre Filmé*, with its comprehensive summary of the traditions of this practice and its analysis of *Les Parents Terribles*; Doniol-Valcroze's *De l'Avant-Garde*, which discusses Bresson, Cocteau, *Farrebique*, and that charming, neglected film by Roger Leenhardt, *Les Dernières Vacances*; and Henri Agel's essay on the relationship of films and novels. A curiosity—or so it seems from this side of the Channel—is Denis Marion's appraisal of the various shades of French realism, which admires *Manon*, Cayatte's realisation of *Les Amants de Vérone*, places *Pépé le Moko* as one of Duvivier's best films and even finds good words for his two most recent ones. This, no doubt, is an extreme example of the differences of national approach, though it is interesting that most of the French rate Becker (especially *Casque d'Or*) less highly, and Yves Allegret (especially *Manèges*) more highly, than we do.

Charensol's account of Clair's creation of *Les Belles-de-Nuit* tells how the idea first came to him—walking down Fifth Avenue, he suddenly thought of "*une idée d'Intolerance comique*," and quickly nourished it with remembered relevant passages from Casanova, Pascal and Gérard de Nerval—and then the preparation, the scripting, the casting, the shooting, the critical reception, and so on. It is a much less full account than, say, Lillian Ross' *Picture* or Lindsay Anderson's *Making a Film*, and also much less personal than either. Curiously enough, while Charensol's admiration for Clair is unbounded, there is nothing intimate or really attached in the portrait of him. He is made a figure of talent, reputation, anecdote, and the only quality that sharply emerges is his fascinating thoroughness. The passages on the intensely detailed develop-

ment and manufacture of the scenario are the most revealing. Perhaps because Charensol is not only an admirer but a close friend of Clair's, he swerves into unnatural detachment when writing about him. At all events, in its description of facts, methods, events, the book is lucid and interesting.

Jean Quéval's monograph on Carné combines criticism with appreciation—criticism that is reluctant but firm over the disappointments of the later period. As he compactly puts it, "le mal a commencé quand les choses (et les êtres) ont cessé d'être une réalité qui signifie pour devenir des symboles, des entités. . . ." His analysis of the earlier films is full, just and sensitive; and he has, incidentally, "come round" to *Drôle de Drame* since writing about it in the Index to Carné's films for the British Film Institute. ("Je me suis complètement reconcilié avec lui," he remarks, "lors de sa reprise, à l'été dernier.") On *Juliette*, he releases the malicious but exact observation that it is the best German film since the war. Like the other books, this one is also admirably documented and illustrated.

HISTOIRE DU CINEMA, by René Jeanne and Charles Ford. Volume 2. The silent cinema 1895-1929: Europe (except France), America (except U.S.A.), Africa, Asia. (S.E.D.E., Paris. 1,500 frs.)

Reviewed by James Morgan

The tradition of writing histories of the cinema is strong in France, which has already given us, to name only the two most prominent, Sadoul and Bardèche and Brassilach; indeed, it seems to be a favourite occupation of the Latin as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon temperament. (*The Film Till Now* hardly provides a point of comparison, since it was not designed as a comprehensive historical work but as a critical survey.) The second volume of René Jeanne's and Charles Ford's *Histoire encyclopédique du Cinéma* has just appeared, five years after the first volume (which dealt exclusively with the French cinema from 1895-1929); the third, due to be published at the end of this year, will be devoted entirely to the United States, from the beginnings to the present day, and the fourth, to appear in 1954, will cover the sound film in all other countries.

Volume 2, then, which contains over 500 pages and is generously illustrated, covers the silent cinema in Italy, Scandinavia, Russia, Britain and, more briefly, all other countries. It is, perhaps, the most readable of its kind because the most intimate in approach, dealing not only with the artistic qualities of films, tendencies, periods, directors, but also evoking the general climate of the eras covered, analysing commercial conditions, reflections of popular taste and so on. This makes its total sense of direction less immediately apparent to grasp than Sadoul's history, which is a monument of conscientiously applied scholarship, but also gives it a more picturesque and complex flavour.

As with all film historians, Jeanne and Ford are faced with the problem of films they haven't seen, and the dislocations of emphasis involved. The section on the British cinema, for instance, though full of information, under-estimates the importance of Hepworth and of the 20's films of Asquith and Hitchcock; and the section on the Soviet cinema gives only the barest mention to Kuleshov and Boris Barnet. This, of course, is an unavoidable drawback to all film histories, and what is important here is the eclecticism of the authors' taste and approach, which avoids the occasional perversities of Bardèche and Brassilach, and the massiveness of the documentation, which ensures that everything is mentioned even if not always given the prominence which it deserves.

The stills, admirably chosen, reflect the general approach. They include scenes from films, directors, players, technical pioneers. There are eighty pages of alphabetically arranged *Notices Biographiques* on leading personalities—directors and players—covered in the first two volumes, and an index of names (but not film titles) mentioned in the second. This is a work which will clearly take its place in the front rank of film histories, and deserves translation.

FROM UNDER MY HAT, by Hedda Hopper. Illustrated. (Frederick Muller, 12/6)

Reviewed by Araminta Teas

In our quiet metropolis the film gossip column is still a growing child—but already cutting its first strong, pointed

teeth and flexing its terrible muscles.

In America, the child is already a giant. Its food is sex and salaries, major indiscretions and private rather than professional reputations. Facts, or near-facts about these topics, when related to stars and published before denials appear in other newspapers, are known as scoops. The two scoop-queens of Hollywood, as ruthless, feared and hung about with propitiatory gifts as any other tribal goddesses, are, of course, Mesdames Hopper and Parsons.

Miss Hopper has now dammed the torrent of her exuberant life within the restricting confines of a book, *From Under My Hat*, which tells of her rise from humble origins as Miss Elda Furry, of Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, to her present eminence as a national figure of broadcasting and the daily newspaper column "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood."

Miss Hopper is not just a strong personality; she is Attila, Genghis Khan and Little Nell all rolled into one. Under those staccato sentences, that frenetic whirl of events (the time-scheme is sometimes pretty hard to follow, and you have to watch Miss Hopper like a hawk or she's off on a chatty story before you know whether you're in the reign of Fairbanks or Tyrone Power)—under the furious ambition and the annihilating vitality, there beats a warm heart, bumping away like some dread dynamo. She doesn't much love Charlie Chaplin or Rex Harrison, and didn't care for the way Gene Tierney announced her pregnancy to Parsons at the same party as Hopper got to hear about it. But Dietrich is a great girl, and so is Norma Shearer and Joan Crawford, and William Randolph Hearst was a good pal too.

Miss Hopper's career took in agency work, a certain amount of hard labour for that other daughter of the American revolution, Elizabeth Arden, and of course the acting profession itself. Though her columnist's success is now at its height, the book seems to indicate that the world still owes the author something, and one hopes they will finish up all square.

There are frequent illustrations of Miss Hopper wearing different hats to visit Errol Flynn, Clark Gable, Merle Oberon, Deborah Kerr and Sabu, greeting our present Queen and Princess Margaret at Ealing Studios in 1945, telephoning at her desk (without her hat), and acting in several films—specially appealing, a downcast pose in ropes of pearls and evening gown, under the frantic gaze of Edwin Arden in *Virtuous Wives*.

If you hope for scandalous revelations, Miss Hopper's book will disappoint. It is after all dedicated "To my mother, who was an angel on earth," and closes with the news that not only did Miss Hopper's mother, the courageous Mrs. Furry, pray for her daughter every night, but that, since Mrs. Furry's death, the well-known musical comedy star Trixie Friganza has taken over that laudable task and intercedes for Hedda devoutly and regularly. For those not content to browse through Norma, Doug, Coop and Ingrid, there are some nice bits about a sterling character called Dema Harshbarger, Hedda's agent, and a very disturbing story about J. M. Barrie calming Maude Adams' acute shyness by wrestling round the room with a huge dog.

"Miss Adams tossed her audience a timid smile, full of April light, and added, 'If you sometime have a visitor who is shy, try putting him or her at ease by doing that.'"

We'll think it over.

POSITIF (Editor: Bernard Chardère). Run by a group of young enthusiasts, this French magazine started eighteen months ago and has so far appeared six times. Its format is modest, its volume slim, but each issue has contained much of interest. Its opening editorial disclaimed any desire to be a "Revue des Jeunes"—meaning, more precisely, that it is not anarchistic, that it has no "parti-pris de scandale" and that it rejects the more agonising signs of puberty.

The approach is both eclectic and thorough. The first issue contained admirable analytic studies of four contemporary films—*Los Olvidados*, *Miracolò a Milano*, *Orphée* and *Autant-Lara's L'Auberge Rouge*. Since that time the magazine has encompassed a long and valuable study of Robert Bresson (Chardère, Nos. 3 and 4), appraisals of contemporary Italian directors, a sharp assault on *Don Camillo*, and a superb special issue on Jean Vigo. A serious and worthwhile venture, but not at all humourless, and sympathetic in tone. (Subscription to 6 numbers, 725 frs.: 5, Rue Cuvier, Lyon.)

CORRESPONDENCE

Science Fiction

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—Whilst appreciating that in such limited space Penelope Houston (*Glimpses of the Moon*, SIGHT AND SOUND, April/June, 1953) could hardly hope even to mention more than a handful of the hundreds of science fiction films made during the past fifty years, it seems a pity that in an article so largely concerned with "interplanetary" films she should have ignored several of the more interesting early efforts.

For instance, far from lagging behind in this sphere, Britain actually anticipated the Hollywood cycle by some thirty years, with a version of *The First Men in the Moon* (H. G. Wells) made soon after the first World War. This period also saw the production in Denmark of Ole Olsen's *Himmelskibet*, in which for the first time film-makers aimed farther afield—to Mars, no less—and which appears to have been the first film of its kind to contain a "Message," since the intrepid explorers encounter a super-civilised race, one of whom, in evitably a beautiful girl, returns with them to Earth on a peace mission.

A beautiful Martian maiden also appears in the early Soviet film *Aelita*, which recorded the adventures of a young Russian engineer who led a proletarian revolution on Mars and won the hand of the ravishing Princess Aelita. A few years later Fritz Lang directed *Frau im Mond*, for which a space-ship of the latest scientific design was constructed by the famous German rocket-pioneer Professor Ob Barth. Incidentally, it seems that during the last war the Germans embarked on an ambitious feature-documentary covering the entire field of rocket development and space travel, but only the first part, incorporating newsreel material and sequences from the Lang film and from an earlier documentary short, *Space Ship I Departs*, was completed.

There seems to be no reason why we should not, eventually, see as good films produced in the science fiction as in any other genre. Perhaps a start in this direction has been made by the producers of the forthcoming 3-D epic *They Came from Outer Space*, who are said to be working on an original screen-play by Ray Bradbury, whose literary talents have been recognised by such distinguished critics as Christopher Isherwood and Angus Wilson.

Yours faithfully,
D. J. IBBERSON.

4, Denmark Place,
London, W.C.2.

Stock Shots

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—William K. Everson's article (published in the April/June issue of SIGHT AND SOUND) on the frequent use of stock film in "new" film productions, made fascinating reading. What an intensely minute study of the subject Mr. Everson has made—and what a remarkable memory he must possess, to spot the re-use of old Western stock, when Western settings alter so little.

In connection with the volcanic explosion in *Road to Bali*, Mr. Everson writes that he cannot remember from where it was derived. Strangely enough, this is the one instance he put forward that I had spotted myself. I am certain that it was the same volcanic explosion seen first in *Aloma of the South Seas* (1942) and recently in *When Worlds Collide*—like *Road to Bali*, both Paramount films.

I was most interested to read the article on King Vidor, particularly as I have wondered for some time what had happened to his film for Warner Brothers—the Bette Davis vehicle, *Beyond the Forest*—which must have been the only Bette Davis film during her Warner Brothers' period to be turned down by the A.B.C. circuit (apart from the films she made for Warners before its formation, and I'm not certain when A.B.C. commenced). Although, I believe, Bette Davis's *Winter Meeting* did not have an A.B.C. booking either.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT E. DALLISON.

5, The Sycamores,
Hersden,
Kent.

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—William K. Everson in his article on *The Stock Shot Habit* refers to the volcanic explosion in *Road to Bali*, from he can't remember where. It appeared to me to be from an earlier Dorothy Lamour film, *Her Jungle Love*, made by Paramount before the war. Incidentally, it was a pleasant film, much superior to the multitude of others of the same kind.

Yours faithfully,
ROY TELFORD.

40, Lamb Street,
East Cramlington,
Northumberland.

Cartoons in Britain

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—The criticism of our cartoon *Figurehead* in the March number of the MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN contains a statement: "Given adequate subjects, the Halas and Batchelor Studio might produce a series of adult and civilised cartoons which could provide a real British equivalent to U.P.A."

Now this is so wide of the mark as to be misleading, much as one may agree with it as a purely hypothetical assumption. The facts are that British cartoons can never assume that they will be given adequate subjects.

British cartoons cannot recover costs in the home market and rely on sponsored films for a living. The choice of subject, not unnaturally, is the sponsors'. American cartoons, on the other hand, can recover costs in their home market and profits from British and overseas distribution, which is geared to absorb them in quantity.

On the rare occasion when we can afford to make a theatrical cartoon (by financing it ourselves), we can look forward to an unequal struggle for distribution, since it is not one of a "series," and the knowledge that it will, in any case, never recover its cost.

What is lacking is not adequate subjects, but the opportunity to produce at least a dozen films a year—the average American output.

Criticism should obviously be concerned with the end result, but I feel it would be helpful to the few of us making cartoons in this country if the basic economic factors operating against a new approach to cartoon could be understood and realised by members of the British Film Institute.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN HALAS.

Halas and Batchelor Cartoon Films Ltd.,
10A, Soho Square,
London, W.1.

New Dimensions

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—Gavin Lambert's "Report on New Dimensions" is rather weak on the history of stereoscopic motion pictures. Many of the early non-photographic and some of the early photographic motion picture devices of the second half of the 19th century were for stereoscopic viewing. Stereoscopy is of considerable antiquity, the first treatment of the principles of binocular vision being by Euclid (in his *Optics*). . . . The Anaglyph method of display celebrates its centenary this year, being due to the German physicists Rollman and Dove in 1853. d'Almeida rediscovered it in 1858, and suggested as an alternative method for motion pictures the synchronised-shutter viewing system. This last has been tried out many times. Anaglyph pictures were common as novelty shorts after 1918, not in the 1930's alone, as Mr. Lambert suggests.

Separation of stereo-pairs by polarized light was realised for motion pictures by 1908. Here polarization had to be achieved by piles of glass laminae, which was more cumbersome than "polaroid," but little if any less efficient (or expensive). What we now call "polaroid" had been invented many decades before by Herapath, but had been forgotten for the usual reasons; to wit, poor library classification, and the refusal of technicians and inventors to read previous work. The principle of polarized stereoprojection seems to date from 1891 at latest.

Modern systems using polaroid were displayed at the New York World Fair and Golden Gate Centenary Exposition, San Francisco, 1939 and 1940. For some reason everybody, both sides of the Atlantic, are very coy about mentioning this well-attested fact. . . .

A wide, panoramic screen is far more fundamental, as those of us who saw Gance's *Napoleon* at the Tivoli will remember—or even the Magnascope (was it?) used at the Stoll to blow up sections of *Chang*, *General Crack*, etc. The normal cinema screen normally viewed can be covered by a postcard two feet from the eyes; the public likes to be “in” pictures. Hence the passion for swollen television screens viewed at short range, even if what is seen is a magnification of something that isn't there. Panoramic motion picture screens imply, of course, that the selective power of the camera is thrown away, and that much of the action will not be looked at, because you cannot possibly view the whole of a wide scene at once.

So wide screens would seem to have the greatest impact and, unlike stereo, would be difficult to simulate on domestic television. But does the future lie with it? Consider this quotation:

“One of the outstanding developments of the past year in the motion picture industry has been the introduction of wide film. . . . And now, even though the public has been permitted to view one of the results, no one seems to have any definite idea as to what the future will bring forth in the way of a standard size film. One thing seems certain—that we will have a standard film wider than the present standard of 35mm.”

This is by Paul Allen, “Wide Film Development,” *Cinematograph Annual*, 1930.

The wide film feature the public was “permitted” to see (at its own expense) was *Happy Days*, on Fox-Grandeur 70mm width film. This and later wide-film issues were displayed in the U.K. cropped to standard screen width. One thing alone is certain—costs of production and exhibition will go up for precious little in return.

Yours sincerely,

R. A. FAIRTHORNE.

Kirk Michael,
Clockhouse Road,
Farnborough, Hants.

Richard Massingham

The death of Richard Massingham at the age of 56 deprived British films of a light humorist of original flavour. Dr. Massingham became a professional film-maker fairly late in life; it was not until 1940 that he acquired his own company, Public Relationship Films—a “ghastly name,” he once commented—to make films for various government ministries and sponsors, after having been senior resident medical officer at the London Fever Hospital for many years and made two films in his spare time.

These first two films, *Tell me if it Hurts* (1935) and *And so to Work* (1936), concerned, respectively, a visit to the dentist and an account of a bachelor's unhappy life from the time he gets up in the morning to the time he leaves for work. They established the character that was later to exhort us, during war-time, to take a bath with only five inches of water in it, to be careful in the black-out; and, after the war, to avoid ptomaine poisoning, to use pedestrian crossings properly, and not to grumble too much about continuing austerities. The star of most of his films, he became known as “Mr. Average Citizen,” but what he really portrayed was a kind of magnified grotesque of the average citizen, a simple, genial, persevering but bewildered personage trying to cope with the manifold practicalities of living and the exasperating whims of Authority.

In *Tell me if it Hurts*, the humour of the “average” citizen's reaction to the ravages of a sudden toothache and the rituals, gadgets and tension of an appointment with the dentist, had a ferocity about it sufficient to cause accusations of ridicule of this honourable profession, and for a censor's certificate at first to be denied. But as the years passed we were to recognise and, a little uncomfortably, gloat over the face of Dr. Massingham in acute distress. It always provided a delicious camera study. The round, creased face, the mouth with its infinite capacity to droop, the eyes so adept at rolling in despair—everything seemed to crinkle, droop and roll not so much in agony as in sheer astonishment and perplexity. Pain came like some desperate affront to the business of living—complicated enough without toothache and, later, lumbago (in *The Cure*) and infected food (*Another Case of Poisoning*).

The spiritual pain of *What a Life*, though, was perhaps his most refined comic achievement. In this C.O.I. film he played a Londoner who, with a friend, became so depressed with the dreary aspects of post-war British life that he decided suicide was the only way out. Sitting in a pub, brooding hugely over the injustice, the hopelessness of it all, the face grew sadder and more utterly baffled; the lumpish figure was observed at last to be trying to end it all, with ludicrous inefficacy, by paddling into a shallow sea from a rowing-boat.

Dr. Massingham's films showed, for good and bad, the persisting gifts of the amateur. The amateur was always there in the acute and agreeably irresponsible attitude towards practical human predicaments, never tamed by sponsorship and offering a welcome contrast to most propaganda films; and there, too, in the occasional failure to prevent facetiousness, over-emphasis, marring a sprightly humour. (Neither *They Travel by Air*, nor *The Cure*, nor *Moving House*, escaped this.) But they nearly always communicated the feeling of enjoyment, of a nature as genial and attractive on the screen as off, of somebody who relished both making films and creating an original and topical character.

Theodore Huff—In Memoriam

Thayer, in his *Osler, the Teacher*, remarks on the “singular and unique charm of his presence.” I can think of few to whom this rare quality was more applicable in that special field he made so characteristically his own than to Ted Huff. Indeed, one might say that evanescent quality was the touchstone of his life. His real interest lay not in film *per se* (he was, for instance, indifferent to many aspects of it) but in evoking, through a phenomenal memory and what, for want of an existing word, one could call “cine-archæology,” the inherent charm that was to be found, savored and recorded in this new art. I could name other “cine-archæologists” and, doubtless, you could name them with me, but we would both be hard put to match their matter-of-fact reports with the delightful images he evoked. Whether from the lecture platform, in a projection room (punctuated with his *ad lib* running comments, pointing out where that set had been used before, where that exterior had been shot, or that famous star who was then an extra, etc.), or poring over an historic old still, which he studied as a jeweller does a gem for appraisal, he fascinated us with his fondly remembered facts—but facts touched with fancy (what we mean by the so-often misused word, “glamour”), nostalgia illumined by memories made up of mosaics of relevant detail, and, in the last analysis, reminiscence tinged by regret . . . for a time more suited to his own temperament (and ours). This was the magic with which he presented the kaleidoscopic history of the movies to us. To speak of “archæologists” about a fledgling art scarcely two generations old would seem a paradox were it not for the fact that even in this short time has so much been lost and forgotten. Instinctively, therefore, he became that indispensable adjunct to the art of the film, a “keeper of the flame” in the temple of the cinema muse, a *shamos*, if you wish, who knew all the answers, who preserved the old legends and memories, and who was surrounded by doting acolytes who discussed and argued, endlessly, the finest points, like so many finicky Talmudic scholars. Does not the Talmud say the highest virtue in man is learning? I recall some students of the University of Southern California, where he taught the film course one term, asking Seymour Stern to arbitrate a difference of opinion between them and their teacher. “If Professor Huff says so,” Stern told them, “then it is so!” And would hear no more. That's about the way we all felt about him. I, myself, once termed him the “arbiter supreme” on all film facts. But facts, alone, are not enough, as we can see when we compare his researches with those of many others. Facts have to be transformed through a real love for the medium into living things, even if they live only in memory.

He wanted this to be the best of all possible film worlds. The print must be complete (granted the film had even the slightest interest for one esoteric reason or another—“Well, it's a period piece,” he'd say, half-apologetically, when no other reason could be found to counter an objection); on the original tinted stock, if possible, and with the original titles. The projection speed, if the film was a silent one, must be 60, not 90, but he'd compromise by permitting the

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July 1952-June 1953

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Dear Film Enthusiast,

You will, we hope, excuse our writing to you in this rather open manner, but it was obviously the most expedient way of reaching the greatest number of you. We want to tell you about some of the books that we have in stock, and answer some of the questions that occur most frequently.

When asked for a history of World cinema we never hesitate to recommend "**The Film Till Now**," by Paul Rotha and Richard Griffith; 755 pages and over 170 illustrations, revised and enlarged in 1949. At 50/- it is excellent value. Here we should also mention the Paul Rotha and Roger Manvell "**Movie Parade**," a pictorial survey of World cinema—676 illustrations with explanatory text—at the relatively low price of 30/-; and from America, Deems Taylor's "**Pictorial History of the Movies**," a book with a 99% bias towards the American film but to good purpose—over 700 illustrations covering the years 1889 to 1949—priced at 25/-.

No book is more worthy of the sub-title, "An introduction to Film Appreciation" than "**The Art of the Film**," by Ernest Lindgren. This book is undoubtedly our most consistent best-seller, and rightly so. We can always supply you with a copy at 16/-.

"We" don't read French—not even to translate accurately the title of Rene Clair's book, "**Reflexion Faite—Notes pour servir à l'histoire de l'art cinematographique de 1920 a 1950**," priced at 10/6d., but we have it in stock, together with one or two other excellent books in French. And we always stock the magazine "**Cahiers du Cinema**."

New books—well, the most important, anyway—"The Technique of Film Editing," by Karel Reisz, at 30/- is one; then there is the much discussed "Red Badge of Courage" book, "**Picture**," by Lillian Ross, at 16/-; and at the time of writing we are promised the next volume in the National Cinema series, "**The French Film**," by Georges Sadoul, for the early part of July, at an approximate price of 16/-. By the way, we can still supply all the earlier volumes on British, German, Soviet, Italian and Scandinavian film. Albert E. Smith's "**Two Reels and a Crank**" is a first-class account of the pioneering days in the American movie industry; 285 pages, with 28 illustrations, 30/-.

Perhaps in conclusion we should mention two book bargains which will interest you; firstly, Peter Noble's "**The Negro in Films**," which we can supply for 5/- as against its published price of 15/-, and, secondly, the American edition of the late Theodore Huff's "**Charlie Chaplin**," which we are offering for 25/-, against the earlier price of 36/-.

If you have read this far you will realize that we have barely touched the fringe of our subject in this letter, but that the titles mentioned are representative of our stock of books on the cinema. We also stock a wide range of literature, including sections in the following categories: modern fiction, classic fiction, humour, travel guides and maps, dictionaries and language books, learned works on contemporary subjects, folk music and jazz, and, of course, every available British book on film and theatre. Call and see for yourself.

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